# The Expansion of Sedentary Villages from Nabagade Valley to Qohaito Plateau: Intersecting Lineage, House and Community Paradigms

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By

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A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology of the
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## Certification

The undersigned certifies that he has read and hereby recommends for acceptance by the Graduate School of Human Sciences at Osaka University a thesis titled "*The Expansion of Sedentary Villages from Nabagade Valley to Qohaito Plateau: Intersecting Lineage, House and Community Paradigms*" in fulfillment of the degree of Doctor in Philosophy in Anthropology of the University of Osaka.

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## List of Abbreviation

CAD:- Century AD

CARP:- Cultural Asset Rehabilitation Project

CCP:- Central Cattle Pattern

CPT:- Central Place Theory

ELF:- Eritrean Liberation Front

EPLF:- Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front

GAME:- German Archaeological Mission to Eritrea

IDP:- Internally Displaced People

NME:- National Museum of Eritrea

UNESCO:- United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization

## Glossary of Indigenous Terms

*Abur:-* is part of the domestic space in *galba, agudo* and *nahsa* kind of dwellings specialized for housing infant animals.

*Agani:-* Literally means highland or mountains, and the term is sometimes used to refer to the highland or mountain dwellers of the Saho communities.

*Agoh:-* is part of the domestic space in *galba, agudo* and *nahsa* dwellings types specialized for keeping adult animals.

*Agudo:-* Literally means a hut, and is the second dwelling type constructed by the Feqat Harak

*Ai'it:-* Corresponds to the infant, and is the first level of the age-grade of the Saho and comprises of uncircumcised boys and girls.

*Are:-* The word 'are' has variety of contextual meaning. Literally, it means a house/homestead but it can also be use used interchangeably with the term *dik* to denote lineage groups, sometime maximal and minimal group.

*Balbala:-* Means sleeping space in the traditional dwelling types, and the space is enclosed by pebble stones arranged in rectangular design.

*Brkuta:-* is a spherical bread prepared by pasting the dough over a hot round pebble stone. During the preparation, the pasted dough is put at the edge of bon fire. The interior part is cooked by the hot stone and the exterior part by the flames of the bon fire. *Brkuta* is the daily bread of shepherds who stay in the cattle camp.

*Burguda:-* Is the liminal phase between childhood and manhood in the age-system of the Saho. Entry to *burguda* is marked by the performing the *gombo ido* rite of passage that terminates childhood, and yet manhood/womanhood is to be achieved after wedding. *Burguda* is social status of 'neither boy and nor man'.

*Dagha:-* Means porridge in Saho language, and is the traditional food among the people. But nowadays, its ceremonial value is decreasing and been replaced by other food types; such as rice with beef stew, and *injera* with either chicken or pumpkin plus beef stew.

*Digib:-* Literally means wedding ceremony. It is the last in the series of rites of passage performed by an individual. For a widow there is another rite of passage called, *ida*, performed after the death of the husband.

*Dik:-* *dik*' has multiple connotations; in some context it means a kinship

group, clan, village, family or locality. Moreno Vergari (2007) also added extra meaning of the word such as place of birth, country and nation.

*Dipokat:-* It is a female rite of passage performed at the end of childhood; some informants say this ritual is performed after the first menstrual cycle. It is primarily hairstyle ritual, where the girl ceremonially and ritually change her hairstyle from *frada gombo* (signify childhood) into *dipokat*.

*Ed Motan:-* This is a cult of the dead, which takes place during the Ramadan month and the main ritual activity is the evening prayer session. Participants of this ritual are the residential units who dwell in the same locality.

*Ejaba:-* Literally means speech but implies the verbal power to bless and curse.

*Enda:-* *Enda* is loan word from Tigrinya language, and is used to refer to lineage groups or descent group in the Saho and Tigrinya communities. It is equivalent with the Arabic word '*bet*', and is used in the same context interchangeably.

*Feq:-* Means the short form of *Feqih*, which is frequently used as a title for religious teacher and lineage founders.

*Feqih:-* *Feqih* is a religious title originated in the medieval period given to Islamic scholar, and the title was maintained by popular family in Zula (Tigre ethnic group) but later transferred to the ancestors of the Feqat Harak. The eponym of the minimal lineage group is derived from the term.

*Galba:-* Literally means a cave/rock shelter, and is one of the four traditional dwelling types of the Saho.

*Gaysha:-* Has the same meaning with *harak* and *mela*, and means a sub tribe.

*Gedi'a:-* This is a plaster used to polish the living floor of rock shelter, hut and *nahsa* dwelling. It is prepared from a mixture of clay and dung.

*Goho:-* *Goho* is a part of the domestic space (room) in Saho dwelling meant for women.

*Gombo:-* is the second age-grade and corresponds to childhood. *Gombohood* starts right after the circumcision and ends at the age of 15-18 when the person undergoes *gombo ido* ritual.

*gombo ido:-* *Gombo ido* literally means 'throwing *gombo* (childhood) way'. This is

a ritual for boys, equivalent to the *dipokat* for girls, that terminates the childhood, and the main ritual activity performed during the ritual is the change of the hairstyle from *gombo* to *gofere*.

*Gubi:-* Means lowland or plain in Saho language, and sometime is used to refer to communities who dwell in the plain/lowland.

*Harak:-* Means a sub-tribe in the segmentary structure of the Saho.

*Kisho:-* Is equivalent to the word 'tribe' is the highest order in the segmentary hierarchy of the Saho people. In some cases, a *kisho* might be superseded by pan-*kisho* organization; such as the Assaurta.

*Lisho:-* Means engagement.

*Lebhaito:-* The last age-grade in the age system of the Saho that corresponds to man or senior, and is attained after marriage.

*Malho:-* Is a small opening carved at the base of *abur* and *agoh (galba* and *agudo*) to channel animal urine from inside the room outward.

*Mekado:-* *Mekado* is a part of the domestic space (room) in Saho dwelling meant for men.

*Mela:-* Literally means paternal kins, and in the context of tribal organization the term *mela* is used to refer to sub-tribe and in some occasions a

clan.

*Melhin:-* Is a birth rite, alternatively called *simaya*, which means 'naming' in Arabic. The ritual is performed at the 7th day of the birth. This rite is important for the infant for it is in this ritual name is selected. It is also important for the *ulla* (birth giving mother) because in her honor is offered by slaughtering animal. The food offering is expected to fasten her physical recovery from the labor and postpartum bleeding.

*Mereba'e:-* A rectangular dwelling made from brick or stone wall with corrugated iron roof.

*Mesjid:-* Literally means mosque, and in most traditional dwelling or villages, *mesjid* is constructed by circular 1 meter high wall. In some villages in the plateau a *nahsa mesjid* is constructed. The biggest *mesjid* is located in the village of Wekeiro (built in 2000) with a compound of 80m by 80m. The main building has about 20m by 20m dimension with dome and tower at the top of the main building. The *mesjid* is named after the founder of the minimal lineage, *Feq* Ibrahim, and is the ritual site for one of the ancestor veneration rituals dedicated for the apical ancestor.

*Nabagade:-* Is a compound term derived from *naba* and *gade*; the former means big and the later mountain, and thus the meaning of Nabagade is big mountains. Nabagade is located at the middle course of Komali River, immediately below the Qohaito Plateau. Nabagade is also indigenous taxa term for altitudinal categorization of the clan territory, and refers to the mid-altitude area.

*Nahsa:-* Is a rectangular dwelling built from wall stone and thick roof made from straw, bough and earth, and is one of the four dwelling types practiced by the Feqat Harak.

*Numa:-* The last age-grade in the age system of the Saho that corresponds to woman or senior, and is attained after marriage.

*Qeshi:-* Means priest, and was the title of the apical ancestor before his conversion to Islam later in his life.

*Qohaito:-* Is a plateau with an elevation of 2700 meter above sea level, and is the highest plateau in Eritrea. It is located at the intersection of the eastern Escarpment and the Southeastern highlands of the country. Qohaito is famous for extraordinary and diverse archaeological remains as well as landscape beauty, which enables the sites to be enlisted tentatively

in the UNESCO's world heritage list.

*Sibdi:-* Money paid by the Feqat Harak as a rental fee to the village of Tekonda'e

*Tahti:-* is also a loan word from Tigrinya that member of the Feqat Harak frequently used to refer to the lowland. It is also part of the indigenous category of clan territory ecologically.

*Tahara:-* Literally means circumcision, and is the rite of passage that marks entry into childhood; *gombo*hood.

*Teskar:-* Is a postmortem rite performed for a deceased person.

Tigre*:-* Is one of the nine ethnolinguistic groups in Eritrea, bordering with the Saho ethnolinguistic group in the lowlands. The Tigre inhabitants of Zula are also maternally related to the Feqat Harak, because the ancestress of the lineage group is from this ethnolinguistic group.

Tigrinya*:-* An ethnolinguistic group that share border with the Saho in the highland, and the apical ancestor of the minimal lineage belongs to this ethnic group.

*Wedgit*:- A title for the leader of the warrior class

*Ziban:-* A loan word from Tigrinya language used to refer to the plateau.

*Ziyari Tena:-* Is the cultivation ritual, initiated by Qadi Abdela, performed on the 12th June (Geez Calendar) of each year under juniper tree near the village of Mereba'e.

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# Preface

Qohaito entered anthropological and archaeological literature at the end of the 19th century with the publication of Theodore Bent's book, who discovered the site in his expedition to Abyssinia. His book, *The Sacred City of the Ethiopians* (1896), described Qohaito as the location of the ancient city of Kelewe, mentioned in the monumental document of The *Periplus of Erythraean Sea*. The correlation between the ancient city of Kelewe and Qohaito suggested by Bent spark century-long debate whether the correlation exactly fits the description in the book and the archaeological findings of Qohaito. Consequently, many scholars supported the hypothesis, while others attribute the description in the book to other archaeological sites in the region, and some even went as far as the eastern coast of the Red Sea. But, the syntheses and analytical works by these scholars regarding Qohaito is profoundly a speculative and too preliminary based on short-term field visits and reconnaissance type of archaeological fieldwork, without proper excavation and intensive fieldwork.

The multiplicity of archaeological findings found in Qohaito mixed with the historical and contemporary settlement by the some Saho lineage groups forms a maze work type distribution of material culture difficult to frame proper chronological outline of these

disturbed findings. The diverse archaeological features of Qohaito include late stone age lithic industry, prehistoric pastoral cave sites with considerable rock art concentration, early Neolithic ceramic and ground and polished tool assemblages, classic urban architecture with large monuments and ‘temple’ building and large market centers, medieval churches and settlements (especially in the valley down the plateau), and contemporary villages originates at least a century and half ago. The concentration of all these features in a small plateau without proper chronological outline makes it so difficult to reconstruct, sort and classify, the culture-historical process and the proper development of complexity in the plateau.

As the first analytical ethno-archeological (and historical anthropology) doctoral research work ever conducted in the country, this dissertation embarked on a challenge to create a considerable order to the archaeological maze mixed with ethnohistorical and ethnographical findings in the site. The best approach to dig the prehistoric and historic past of Qohaito Plateau is to start from the recent period, and unpack the cultural process in downstreaming manner to the anteriority. Hence, creating the most recent occupational history of Qohaito confronts the research as the major challenge as well as forms the bedrock objective. To solve the problem and to establish a systematic area

and era (period) of research depends on ethnohistorical and archaeological remains of the plateau. The researcher decided to follow the evolutionary and historical trajectory of the contemporary inhabitants of the Qohaito Plateau, and accordingly the root of the culture occupation goes four centuries back in time. Hence, the last occupational history (settlement) of Qohaito and the Nabagade Valley roughly started in the 1600s, recovered from the genealogical account of the inhabitants, and dissertation aspires at reconstructing the social and natural process that affected the last phase of occupation of Qohaito.

The discovery of a distinctive and integrated chapter in the millennia-long history of the plateau is a remarkable achievement in Qohaito studies. First the culture historical periodization of the latest occupation history (ethnohistorical) by identifying sites that are associated with the contemporary inhabitants from the sites that belong to the premodern era is distinguishing. The interspacing and spatial overlap of the material culture remains in Qohaito Plateau is thus broadly separated into two periods; the *Pre-Feqat Harak* occupation (pre-1600 AD), and the *Feqat Harak* (1600 - ) occupation. This dissertation hence examines closely the Feqat Harak occupational and settlement history and pattern in Central Qohaito. The nuclear objective of the research

is to synthesize the processes of the spread of sedentary villages from the Nabagade Valley to the Qohaito Plateau.

The theoretical and methodological inspiration of the dissertation originates from the current anthropological and archaeological discourses regarding the co-optation kinship (lineage) theory with other theories especially the concept of house. Majority of scholars wish the total rejection of lineage theory and its immediate replacement by other new analytical tools. Recently, however, a compromising theoretical ground connecting both, seemingly opposite but not, streams began to surface in anthropological and archaeological literature. The dissertation wishes to advocate the new bud of co-exercising lineage theory and concept of house by appropriating necessary theoretical and methodological remedies. In archaeological application of the concept, the current research drew inspiration from Mesoamerican research works, the joint application of lineage with settlement pattern studies is crucial. This dissertation formulates the incorporation and mutual constitution of lineage theory and concept of house in three techniques.

The first technique of merging lineage and house paradigms is by introducing a third dimension (angle) that mediates these concepts and their analytical tools. The concept of community share thematic and analytical formulation with both, and the incorporation of community approach enrich the theoretical and methodological foundations of the application. Community study overlaps with house studies in the common interest of analytical scale like residential unit, inter-site interaction, identity and agency, and slightly with the symbolic attribute constituted/formulated in the community formation, and household organization. Similarly, community study shares considerable common ground with lineage theory especially in the community formation, although opposite direction (lineage focuses on segmentation, while community on aggregation); emphasis on small scale population, process of formation and breakage, and so on. Hence, the trilateral analytical model/tool formed by the intersection of the three concepts (paradigms) provides recommendable research approach (outlook) for historical oriented anthropological study.

The second way of merging lineage and house studies is by diversification of topics and parameters used in the study especially in the concept of house; which is the most flexible and broad. The diversity widens the commonsensical household studies to

broad settlement pattern study and domestic architecture dimension. The elasticity and theoretical flexibility of the concept of house enabled the dissertation to forge and introduce relevant fields of inquiry. The settlement pattern study employed in this dissertation is the aggregate and highest form of household study, and focuses on the distribution of houses, wards and villages in the study area is the nectar, inner essence, of the dissertation. Moreover the dissertation also enriches the incorporation of lineage and house by systematically integrating the architectural variability data in to the study. Hence, the effort to strengthen the joint analytical … diversification of themes and their synergy.

The third technique of co-opting lineage and house paradigms was to transform the methodological and theoretical shortcomings of the lineage theory in order to meet/fit the current research. The immediate need that the dissertation deals with is to attach/add historical tendency (historicity) to the theory. The classical and mid-20$^{th}$ century formulation and application of was purely ahistorical; sociological rather than proccessual. This dissertation attempts to historicize the concept of lineage by cross-examining the lineage data with other types of data, and crating multi-variate analysis/synthesis. Other types of data involved in the multi-dimensional examination

include settlement pattern indices, architectural and dwelling types, inter-community interaction, landscape and ecology, environmental and major historical events, regional and continental social and political developments, and so on.

The application of such complicated and tri-facet concepts and theories to the understanding of Nabagade-Qohaito cultural trajectory is very pragmatic. The Feqat Harak's occupation of the valley and plateau took place in a historical context characterized by complex sets of interacting factors. The research delves deeply into the most remarkable component of the historical process; i.e. formation and spread of sedentary villages, and their expansion pattern with special reference to the valley to plateau expansion.

A final note that I want to remind for readers is about the writing style of the dissertation. The dissertation is debate-oriented literal type concentrating on not merely presenting raw data but also to attempt to formulate synthetic debates throughout the chapters and sections. Most chapters and section present preliminary analysis side by side to the presentation of empirical data, and the final analysis is presented at the later chapters. Moreover the dissertation opened not with the proposal but with the existing

debate and controversy in anthropological and archaeological discourses, and the proposal is presented at the last section of chapter one. Finally, the dissertation wished to adapted orthographic note developed by the editors of the Journal of Aethiopica, but to simplify the readers who are not well acquainted with the indigenous language, I used plain form in the text, and the orthographic equivalent is presented in appendix 1.

## Abstract

The prolonged and continuous human occupation of the Qohaito Plateau, yet no written document discovered to date, left archaeologists and anthropologists with no clue to establish a general chronological outline of the at least three-millennia-long occupation of the site. Despite the rich and diverse archaeological remains found in the site and the early discovery of the site by the end of 19$^{th}$ century, Qohaito remains one of the least known archaeological and ethnographic sites in the region. Most previous anthropological and archaeological researches carried out in the site came up with preliminary and basic analysis, and sometimes decontextualize the archaeological remains by focusing only on arbitrarily selected material remains; such as rock art, temple or podium buildings.

This research pioneers a different approach of studying the origin and development of settlements, and rise of complex communities in the plateau and nearby villages. Based on ethnographic, archaeological, ecological and ethnohistorical data of the contemporary occupation of the Qohaito Plateau and Nabagade Valley, this research seeks to reconstruct the cultural process of the formation and spread of sedentary villages in down streaming way. The 400-years long history of Feqat Harak clan occupation in the plateau and adjacent valley establishes the last chapter in the chronological sequence of settlement history of the plateau. The research employed variety of data collection and analysis methods, such a *conjunctive technique* and *holistic systems approach*, to devise a multi-variate qualitative and quantitative analysis of the process of sedentary village formation and expansion. A tri-facet conceptual and

analytical variable was eventually formulated by systematically integrating lineage, house and community paradigms, and in due course they became structured in a complementary formula. Besides multivariate analysis of the process of formation and spread of sedentary villages, the research also pursues a dialogue among these concepts and analytical variables to propose a symbiotic and mutual constitution of them in anthropological and archaeological researches.

Research findings leads to a conclusion that the spread of Feqat Harak sedentary villages in Nabagade Valley, and eventually to Qohaito Plateau is the result of complex and intricate socio-natural processes; chiefly governed by rapid lineage segmentations, subsistence changes, environmental change and catastrophes, inter-community interaction within and outside lineage group, and colonial experience and regional political situation. The process of settlement expansion is divided into four phases described as '*Early Andal', 'Expansion in the Valley', 'Valley to Plateau Expansion',* and *'Dispersal and Aftermath'*. The research went deeply into the third phase where the Feqat Harak settlement penetrated into Qohaito Plateau, a historical phenomenon that can be described as '*modern repopulation of the plateau*' by sedentary agro-pastoral communities. The inner causes behind this historical event were combination of kinship and non-kinship factors related with the environmental disaster that occurred at the end of 19$^{th}$ century and the emergence of bilateral, one-to-one oriented, *bi*-ethnic inter-community interaction. Three pairs of *bi*-ethnic (Saho and Tigrinya) inter-community relationship evolved that drove the process of modern day sedentary villages in the plateau; Tekonda'e-Feqat Harak, Asa Lesan-Aret, and Dassamo-Gramaten. Finally, the dissertation proposes three types of sedentary village

formation and expansion from Nabagade Valley to Qohaito Plateau; *segmentary*, *hydraulic* and *integrated* types of settlement expansion. The research also inverted the conceptual focus of lineage theory from fission to new type of community formation and aggregation.

# Chapter One

## *Discourse on Lineage Segmentation, Concept of House and Community Paradigm in Anthropology and Archaeology*

Currently, anthropological and archaeological theory and research practices face a dilemma whether to totally abandon the lineage theory in the study of contemporary and past societies or to assimilate (integrate) the theory with other commensurable concepts and analytical tools. Various thinkers forwarded their argument regarding the future relevance of the lineage theory. Proponents of Levi-Strauss's concept of house sought the total rejection of the lineage theory and advocate for its immediate replacement by the concept of house. For them the house is the principal model to study an existing or pre-existing society. Structuralists also severely criticized the lineage theory and like the Levi-Straussians, they seek the '*unconditional*' abandonment of the lineage theory in the study segmentary societies. Adam Kuper (1982), after reviewing the classical and the mid-20$^{th}$ century conceptual and methodological roots of the lineage theory, noted "the efforts of generation of theorists have served only to buy time for the model (lineage theory) in the face of its long evident bankruptcy" (Kuper 1982: 93).

Generally, cultural anthropologists tend to easily reject the lineage model seemingly for two major reasons. First, the paradigmatic shift of the discipline to postmodern concepts geared the discipline to deconstruct series of binary oppositions or dualistic formulations, which the lineage model is predominantly founded on. For instance, fission versus fusion, unitary versus segmentary, and complementary opposing segments were the key assumptions for the formation and application of the model. The

second reason for anthropologists' swift move to abandon the model and quest for alternative concept is the availability of variety of equally credible types of data/information other than kinship. The search for alternative concepts in cultural anthropology thus emanates from the existence of alternative data for the study of human society.

Archaeologists, however, seem to be reluctant to totally dismiss the lineage model basically due to the scarcity of social data in the archaeological record (the material culture collected from archaeological sites). Archaeologists highly regard any kind of social data that can substantiate the missing information from the archaeological site. And coincidentally, the most surviving record of a prehistorical or historical society is the genealogical accounts and kinship related events that profoundly influence the socio-political and economic organization of the society. Regardless of the genealogical depth, traditional societies keep good record of their genealogical information, and this phenomenon assists archaeologists profoundly.

Mesoamerican archaeology represents by far the highest application of kinship model in general and lineage theory in particular. Due to the presence of diverse archaeological remains, segmentary society and continuity of these society to the present day, and ethnohistorical record since the Spanish conquest, we see a widespread application of the model in this part of the world. Hence the application of lineage theory in archaeology has relatively smooth continuity, and unlike cultural anthropologists, the rejection and active quest for alternative model is fairly slower.

The Feqat Harak clan settlement expansion from the ancestral land in Nabagade Valley to Qohaito Plateau presents a good research set up to implement a multi-variate (horizontal and hierarchical) application of the lineage theory, settlement and community studies. Variety of interrelated factors played significant role in the process of village formation and expansion which lasted about four hundred years starting from the apical ancestor up to recent time. The major socio-ecological events that occurred in the minimal lineage's history prove the complexity of the process. Some of the factors that contributed to the complexity of the process include lineage segmentation, environmental transformation, colonial experience, access to multi ecology, seasonal migration pattern, and inter-ethnic (community) relationship.

The core argument this dissertation proposes is the possibility of creating a tri-facet model generated by the integration of three systemically interrelated concepts; lineage, house and community studies, at different analytical level. The basic assumption is the inadequacies of lineage theory can be substantiated by the concept of house, settlement and community studies. This will forge an analytical framework for the comprehensive and complete understanding of the historical process of Nabagade Valley-Qohaito Plateau sedentary village expansion by the Feqat Harak clan. This analytical framework can explain the historical process undergoing in a particular segmentary society. Despite the decades-long segregation of lineage and concept of house to opposite direction, recently some scholars began to acknowledge the mutual inclusiveness of these theories. Bradley Ensor, after critically reviewing the theoretical trajectory that set the lineage model and concept of house apart, believes that both thought have common goal, and noted "the debate should now be on which models best explain a given society and

changes to it, rather than on which framework is the only appropriate one to follow" (Ensor 2011: 220).

This research will demonstrate how a careful integration of these lines of thinking and extra concepts can be a useful and productive analytical tool for reconstructing the historical processes undergoing in a segmentary society across large time scale. The formulation of the new concept is accomplished by putting these analytical concepts at different levels of analytical frameworks. Thus, the dissertation will construct a hierarchical arrangement of these concepts to formulate analytical tool at lower and higher levels of understanding, where the lineage theory with its accompanying data will be treated as the basic framework of analysis, while the settlement and community formation will be used to devise deeper analytical and historical inferences.

## 1.1 Introduction

The Feqat Harak clan[1] belongs to the Minifere *kisho* (tribe) of the Saho ethnolinguistic group in Eritrea. The apical ancestor of the clan, *Feq* Ibrahim, lived sixteen generations ago, and he is the descendant of a Tigrinya ancestor and Tigre ancestress (different ethnic groups). After his conversion to Islam, he married a Tigre woman in the coastal village of Zula, who was the daughter of a famous Islamic scholar. His marriage with Fatuma produced a son named Mohammad. Soon, *Feq* Ibrahim left for Mecca for Haj, and died in Saudi Arabia. *Feq* Mohammad, the son of the apical ancestor, grew in his maternal grandparents' residence in Zula, and after coming of age he decided to leave

[1] The Feqat Harak represents a minimal lineage group, according to Fortes (1940) and others, because they clearly reckon their genealogy to the same ancestor (*Feq* Ibrahim). But since the genealogical depth is exceptionally deep (16 generations) and the presence of several internal segmentations, I will refer the minimal lineage as a 'clan' in this dissertation.

his maternal grandparents' residence in search of his paternal ancestral land. *Feq* Mohammad then traveled to Qohaito, where his Tigrinya relatives and his father used to dwell. Finally, he established his settlement in the village of Andal, located in the Nabagade Valley, and this became the ancestral land of the Feqat Harak. Ever since, the village retains the ritual, religious and until recently the judiciary functions of the clan.

The territory of the Feqat Harak extends between the two ancestral roots of the lineage group; Qohaito Plateau (paternal origin) and Zula (maternal origin). The village of Digdigta in Qohaito Plateau forms the western boundary of the clan territory and the village of Mabaroyta in the Red Sea coast the eastern margin. The territory comprises diverse topographic and ecological units ranging from cool highland, temperate valley, and hot lowland and islands. Topographically, the Qohaito Plateau has flat terrain with approximately 4km width (CARP 2007); the Nabagade Valley in the east has rugged and riverine geomorphology and the eastern lowland flat terrain. The ethnolinguistic term regarding the ecological and topographic classification of the clan territory is framed in tripartite lexicons. Three terms referring the ecological taxa exist in the linguistic categorization of the clan; *Ziban, Nabagade* and *Tahti* meaning highland (plateau), Nabagade Valley and lowland respectively.

Settlement and seasonal transhumance patterns were highly affected by the topography, ecology and other social-ecological parameters, which are mainly oriented to satisfy the subsistence needs of the society. Anderson and Johnson (1988) noted that "the limitation imposed by an unreliable availability of water inhibits the settlement pattern and life styles of the peoples in the lowlands and plains of Ethiopia (including Eritrea),

the Southern Sudan and East Africa, and this in turn affects soil types and vegetation cover" (Anderson and Johnson 1988: 5). Oral history, travelers' accounts and settlement remains indicate that over the generations the principal subsistence base of the Feqat Harak was pastoralism and the members practiced seasonal transhumance to both the plateau in summer (June to October) and to the lowland in winter (November to March) in search of pasture and water. Until late 19th century, the Feqat Harak and the Saho in general did not practice cultivation, rather they engage in pastoralism. John Hotten noted, "for the last few years they [Saho] have been attempting to cultivate barley with success; a wonderful step still limited to a few individuals" (Hotten 1868: 210).

The above note from the traveler's account demonstrates that the Saho lineage groups were not indeed practicing agriculture and we can safely argue that the transition into agriculture or agro-pastoralism took place afterwards. The main reason for the complete absence of cultivation activities in the valley, where the Feqat Harak dwell sedentarily, is highly associated with the inter-ethnic (community) relationship, '*entente cordiale*' (Parkyns 1853), that existed with the neighboring Tigrinya society (sedentary agricultural society). Several forms of economic exchange prevails between the two communities; such as exchange of livestock for grain, lending a livestock for crop share, and pasturing a herd/livestock for either money, grain or milk.

Since the late 19th century, however, the Feqat Harak clan and other Saho lineage groups began to practice cultivation, and hence the onset for gradual transformation into agro-pastoralism took effect. The rudimentary introduction of cultivation economy had wide spread impact in the lineage organization, settlement pattern, corporate group

(community) formation, territorial organization, and largely the formation and spread of sedentary villages in the Nabagade Valley and Qohaito Plateau. The transition into agro-pastoral economy took several decades, and the final step towards a full agriculture in the Qohaito Plateau took place between the 1910s and 1920s. The ritual called *Ziyari Tena*, was initiated in June12 (Geez Calendar[2]) of unidentified year approximately between 1911 and 1927. It was conducted by Qadi Abdela and now became one of the four regular annual ceremonies of the Feqat Harak; the three other annual rituals are two ancestor veneration rituals, and one ritual for the commemoration of recent event.

Formation of permanent villages in the Nabagade Valley since the second generation all the way to the recent period had different causes (factors) at different historical stages. The sixteen generations-long settlement history of the Feqat Harak display a complex web of interacting factors that used to drive the process of sedentary village formation and expansion pattern. Lineage segmentation had significant impact in the early settlement pattern of the Feqat Harak, during the exclusive pastoral phase of the lineage group. Rapid lineage segmentation in the first half of the Feqat Harak history demonstrates how lineage organization and segmentary frame played critical role in the social and territorial organization of the Feqat Harak. The lineage group experienced lineage segmentation and formation of autonomous supra-minimal lineage groups at the $5^{th}$, $7^{th}$, and $9^{th}$ generations, and no lineage segmentation occurred ever since.

[2] Geez calendar is the traditional calendar in Eritrea and Ethiopia commonly used by Orthodox Tewahedo Churches. The New Year of this calendar is September $11^{th}$ in Gregorian calendar, and currently is in the year 2009 C.E (2017).Like the Coptic calendar (Egypt Orthodox Church), Geez calendar has twelve months of 30 days plus five or six (leap year) epagomenal days, and constitutes a thirteenth month (5-6 days).

The cessation of lineage segmentation since the 9th generation, transformation into agro-pastoral subsistence, intensification of the formation of sedentary villages in the Nabagade Valley, and the beginning of sedentary villages in the Qohaito Plateau opens wide gate for other analytical variables to explain the process of valley to plateau expansion in a wider historical context. Meaning, in addition to the pre-existing segmentary lineage frame of the Feqat Harak, other factors and social-ecological events in the 19th century began to impose significant organizational changes in the Feqat Harak subsistence, settlement, and political and territorial organization.

Major changes in the second half of the 19th century that occurred in the territory of the Feqat Harak include local, and regional social and political developments, and environmental changes in the region that brought massive realignment in the social and ecological conditions of the area. As a background, "the 16th and 17th centuries are the most dramatic in the history of the northeast Africa" (Ogot 1992: 703), and this led to massive population movement and subsistence changes in the demographic and territorial organizations of the peoples of the region. The following centuries were very similar to some peoples like the Feqat Harak, who dwell at the contact zones between local, region and international actors. The Feqat Harak dwells in the Qohaito-Zula corridor that connects the Red Sea and Abyssinian highlands, and thus became directly affected by the combined effects of these developments. The eastern end of the territory for instance, the surrounding of Massawa, was "the scene of conflict between four main interests, first Ottomans, second Egypt, thirds a local aristocratic family descended from Ottoman troops and local Belews, and fourth the governor of Tigre" (Punkhurst 1982: 383). The regional and international power struggle and warfare culminated at the

emergence of Italian colonial era (1880s), which shaped the future of the entire region. The colonial encounter introduced major transformations in the settlement pattern, formation and duration of permanent and semi-permanent villages, house forms, changes in subsistence strategies and territorial organization.

Other localized inter-ethnic conflict also devastated the area especially in the plateau and the Nabagade Valley (Upper Comali River) parts of the territory. The oral history of several Saho tribes recount the frequent interethnic and at times intra-ethnic warfare taking place throughout the 19$^{th}$ century. Ibrahim Shum, a respected Saho Orator from the town of Adi Keih, based on famous folk poems narrates about three major battles fought between Saho tribes (pan-tribes) and Tigrean Chiefs. The battles took place at Robrobiya, Aladin-Ma'ebele and Saganto. Most of these local conflicts were carried out cattle raiding and counter raiding purposes. As a result, defense-oriented settlements and cross segment (clan) community formation and corporate group, including for spate irrigation, began to flourish and they led to the emergence of distinct tribal or segmentary polities in the region. James Bruce noted:

> "The Naybe, with a considerable show of uneasiness and confusion, opened the letters, which were said to bring intelligence, that the Hazorta, Shiho, and Tora, the three who possessed that part of Samhar through which our travellers' road led to dobawa, common passage from Masuah to Tigre, had revolted, driven away his servants, and declared themselves independent" (Bruce 1805: 155).

Environmental change and occasional natural disasters throughout the 19th century in the Horn of Africa had important impact in the changing pattern of livelihood of the peoples of the Horn of Africa. Frequent outbreak of epidemics and drought that occurred in the Horn of Africa brought significant readjustment in the socio-economic and political characteristics of the people. Large scale and small scale drought, epidemics and loss of livestock, subject to higher forms of political institutions (entities) created a situation where the Feqat Harak and other Saho *mela*s and *kisho*s were exposed to, which eventually drove them to seek alternative livelihood mechanism.

James Bruce, who travelled across the country of the Feqat Harak by the end of the 18th Century, noted that "the Shiho (Saho) were once numerous, but have been thinned by the ravages of the small-pox" (Bruce 1805: 159). This implies that the epidemics of small pox and other diseases resulted in significant human and animal loss. Other travelers such as Hotten also partially describe the fatal epidemics that occurred in the region and most importantly the severe drought that hit the region in the 1880s, which brought systemic change in the societies. "Of all the periods of ecological stress in the recent history of northeast Africa, the disasters of the 1880s and 1890s stands out as the most significant historical marker in the changing relationships between societies" (Anderson and Johnson 1988: 16).

The spread of permanent settlement from the Nabagade Valley to Qohaito Plateau coincided with all these major social and ecological changes. This dissertation seeks to explain the multivariate and complex process of the spread of permanent settlement by outlining the intertwined factors that can be put together to create analytical framework

that can explain the entire process. The model encompasses three major analytical concepts that are relevant to the social and natural formation of permanent villages among the Feqat Harak, and consistent with the current anthropological and archaeological debate regarding the study of segmentary lineage societies. The dissertation will try to intersect lineage theory, concept of house with a special focus on settlement pattern and community paradigm to holistically explain the process of permanent village formation and spread from Nabagade Valley to Qohaito Plateau.

## 1.2. Revaluating Lineage Theory: *creating new analytical framework*

This section highlights the theoretical foundation of the lineage theory, and its major weaknesses pointed out by various critics. It discusses the roots of the theory from the classic anthropological works, and how it was '*reinvented*' (Kuper 1982) by the mid-20$^{th}$ century structural anthropologists. The works of Evans-Pritchard and Fortes (1940), Middleton and Tait (1958) and Plotnicov and Befu (1962) will be presented here as the major formative contribution in the '*reinvention*' and consolidation of the lineage theory. Later, based on the above contribution, this section will turn to discuss the main criticisms of the theory, viewed from contemporary research practices in anthropology. The main weaknesses that are associated with my research are presented in three point; *political overtone*, *lack of historical framework*, and *inappropriate assumptions* of the lineage theory. Finally, this section will propose how the theory can be assimilated with other related concepts to create a complete analytical model for the research at hand.

Adam Kuper (1982) reviewed the historical development of the theory commonly referred as segmentary lineage theory (system). For Kuper, the earlier conceptual and methodological roots of lineage theory reside in the classical anthropological works of Maine, Morgan and Mc Linean. Later structuralists and several functionalists revived the theory under new guise with widespread ethnographic applications in different parts of the world. The central question of the classic and mid-20$^{th}$ century lineage theory was the same, i.e. how traditional (Pre-industrial or Pre-urban) societies were organized in their social and territorial contexts. What constitutes the stability of headless (acephalous) societies, and what are the dynamics and social features that enhance the stability and the normal function of these societies? Kuper (1982) argued that in the classical and mid-20$^{th}$ century lineage conceptions, the central issues were two pivotal points. "First there was a question of the relationship between 'blood' and 'soil', kinship (or descent) and territory. Secondly, there were the relationship between 'family' on the one hand and the 'clan', 'gen' or 'sib' on the other" (Kuper 1982: 72-73).

Gradually, the lineage theory developed by Evans-Pritchard and Fortes (1940) became popular during the functional and structural school of thought in anthropology. Fortes and Evans-Pritchard (1940) described that the Nuer and the Talensi's ability to administer a large territory in the absence of higher forms of polity was due to the segmentary nature of their social organization. Regulation of territory and access to various ecological resources is maintained by the lineage organization based on segmentary feature of their social organization. According to the theory, the segmentary structure operated at several levels of the lineage organization, mainly divided into

internal and external frameworks, between units arranged hierarchically" (Middleton and Tait 1958: 1).

In *Tribes Without Rulers* (1958) Middleton and Tait enhanced the segmentary lineage theory by defining key terms and introducing classification of segmentary system. They outlined the two exponential features of the theory; the continual segmentation and complementary opposition. "Essential features are the 'nesting' attribute of segmentary societies and characteristics of being in a state of continual segmentation and complementary opposition" (Middleton and Tait 19558: 7). Besides defining key concepts, Middleton and Tait's contribution to the theory is the introduction of the typology of segmentary societies. Based on the degree of authority or interdependence of local groups, degree of specialization of offices, and settlement of dispute in homicide, they identified three types of segmentary lineage system.

Soon after the publication of Middleton and Tait's book, Plotnicov and Befu (1962) also introduced similar classification of unilineal descent groups, and the formation of corporate groups. Their classification has considerable input to the lineage theory because lineage segmentation is partially associated with corporate group formation. Plotnicov and Befu (1962) explored the economic, political and religious corporation of unilineal descent groups. The authors widened the criteria and empirical bases of unilineal descent group classification and practically enriched the classificatory baseline. Compared to Middleton and Tait, the latter classification exhibits broader empirical bases of classification. The latter incorporated descent groups' degree of interdependence and rights over property, the political decision and sanction imposed

by authoritative heads, marriage arrangement, jural coverage, supernatural sanction and ritual symbolization for forging group unity. Hence, compared to the earlier political-oriented narrow taxonomy of Middleton and Tait, their classification offers wide range and flexible taxonomy.

Other advantage of the latter classification is the introduction of structural and settlement classification consistent with the hierarchical apparatus of the segmentary territory system. According to them, three levels of settlement structures exist in the segmentary society, namely *minimal group, local group* and *dispersed group*. They defined *minimal group,* contrary to Fortes minimal lineage, as the basic residential unit occupying a particular locality; *local groups* is a group consisting a unilineally related individuals living within a village (hamlet, settlement, community). Finally, the *dispersed groups* as residence of unilineal group unilineally related individuals who are not all localized in any one area.

Hereafter, I will present the three major conceptual shortcomings of the lineage theory severely criticized by anthropologists, which need to be substantiated by other concepts selected in this study The list is not exhaustive, as I had to concentrate only in the shortcoming that are related to my research.

*1.2.1. Political Overtone*

This refers to the fact that the lineage theory was excessively political-oriented in its development and application. As a result, the rigid and political-oriented classification along with the basic assumptions was exposed to mild and severe criticisms right from

the very beginning. Marshal Sahlins (1961) criticized the excessive political emphasis displayed in Middleton and Tait's taxonomy. He noted, "a tribe as a whole is normally not a political organization but rather a social-cultural-ethnic identity" (Sahlins 1961: 325). He impressively outlined the social and cultural institutions that foster the political and economic integration of segmentary systems. According to him, the mechanical solidarity among segments is forged by pan-tribal institutions such as intermarriage, age grade, military institutions that cut across the primary segment (Sahlin 1961).

It seems to me that Middleton and Tait also decoupled the significance of ritual and ancestor veneration ceremonies in the jural authority or political stability of the lineage system. Their classification suppressed the importance of ritual and veneration ceremonies in creating group unity and cohesion at different levels of the segmentary structure. Earlier, Fortes (1940) highlighted that ancestor veneration rituals, and cult of the dead occupy higher relevance in the political organization of segmentary system. Middleton and Tait slightly mentioned the relevance of ritual in their type 2 segmentary system. "They (type 2) are grouped into overlapping clusters by ritual linking of various kinds … and by quasi-kinship ties" (Middleton and Tait 1958: 13). In the other types, the classification is entirely descent and political oriented with a strong emphasis on territory, and feud and conflict resolution.

Empirical data however show that the cult of the dead and ancestor veneration is an essential feature of the segmentary lineage system. The Feqat Harak annual rituals and cult of the dead have profound contribution in demarcating the tribal boundary, creating identity, locating ritual epicenters, and regulating the constant movement between

segmentary and corporateness (internal/external or lower/higher levels) of the people. The Feqat Harak annually practice two ancestor veneration rituals dedicated to the apical ancestor, one ritual for a historic figure who introduced agriculture (Qadi Abdela), and one ritual for the recent event related to the territorial integrity of the clan. The spatial distribution of the ritual sites of these four rituals is very interesting. Two of them take place in the plateau (western margin of the territory), one in Andal located in the Nabagade Valley, and the last one in the coastal village of Mabaroyta (eastern end of the clan territory). This demonstrates how the ancestor veneration rituals are instrumental in demarcating and symbolically unifying the clan territory.

From political point of view also, the hierarchical difference between ancestor veneration and cult of the dead among the Feqat Harak shows how the political unity among the lineage groups at different levels of organization is created. The four annual venerations in general and the two ceremonies dedicated to the apical ancestor in particular should be attended by every possible member of the minimal lineage regardless of their residence or other differences. The small localized ancestor cult, in Fortes definition cult of the dead, on the other hand should be attended by members of residential unit – families who live in the same locality. The cult of the dead is called feast/celebration of the dead (*Ed Motan*). *Ed Motan* takes place in the month of Ramadan, and the main ritual activity performed in this cult is the evening prayer session.

Compared to the ancestor veneration rituals, *Ed Motan* has less regularity, and is wholly based on individual volunteering to host the ceremony by preparing ceremonial foods

and drinks. The host family prepares foods and drinks and invites several families nearby, and the event is usually in the Ramadan month and at night. Hence, the meaning associated to the ancestor veneration ritual and cult of the dead symbolize and regulate the constant movement of unity and identity at several levels of the segmentary organization, and Middleton and Tait classification did not address the issue adequately.

### *1.2.2. Lack of historical framework*

Another limitation of the description and typology of segmentary system (Middleton and Tait 1958 and Plotnicov and Befu 1962) is the lack of historical framework in their classificatory scheme. Each of the three types of segmentary system proposed by Middleton and Tait and the several classes of corporateness proposed by Plotnicov and Befu are bound and discrete without any indicator of continuity and change among the types. The lack of evolutionary trend in their classification thus hinders any possibility of using the model to explain any historical processes. The model has only limited applicability in the explanation of lineage theory as social and ecological adaptive system. Richard Gould (1978) noted that the concept of adaptation should carry two levels of meaning; "adaptive strategy (forms, devised adjustment) and adaptive process (evolution and change)" (Gould 1978: 21). Lineage theory only explains the adaptive strategy or forms of the social organization of the segmentary system, but not changes and transformations in diachronic and historical process: "association between lineage and families should be treated as sociological question, not as historical issue" (Kuper 1982: 83)

The implication of the lack of historical aspect in the lineage theory is apparent. The increasing tendency of archaeology and anthropology to explain the changes and transformations that occur in cultural system lose benefit from the lineage theory. In the archaeological application of lineage theory particularly the immediate need for the improved version of the model was a quick movement. Fox et al. (1989) noted, "the segmentary and unitary model for Maya society are two ends of a spectrum of many organizational possibilities (Fox et al. 1989). Consequently, Marcus (1992) developed the *dynamic model* to break the centralization/decentralization or segmentary/unitary dichotomy, and opened new organizational and historical possibilities that could occur between these two opposite ends. According to her, Maya society moves between segmentary and unitary forms of social and political organization in a specific historical context.

One of the major reasons for the ahistorical character of the lineage theory is the relatively shallow genealogical depth of the segmentary societies' studied in Africa. Paul Bohannan's (1954) minimal tar for instance was composed of maximum 80 individuals, and the Talensi mostly go four generations (Fortes 1940, Middleton and Tait 1958). Thus the African segmentary system was developed in a context where the segmentary people were demographically small and temporally short-spanned. Contrary to this, the Maya case assisted by ethnohistorical accounts, present longer genealogical extent, and the Polynesian segmentary system has a ranked hierarchy (Sahlins 1961), which might be an indication of a historical process of stratification. Similarly, the Feqat Harak's genealogical depth has broader temporal coverage of sixteen generations calculated to approximately four hundred years. Demographically also the Feqat Harak

clan consists of about eight hundred nuclear families, where majority of them live in the clan territory, while few families are scattered outside the principal clan territory.

In addition to the prolonged genealogical depth, other elements can enrich the historical examination of segmentary societies. Oliver de Montmollin (2006) argues for replacing the simplified formalist evolutionary (band, tribe, chiefdom and state) with settlement pattern indices of degree of stratification, centralization and social integration. All levels of settlement pattern indicators, such as the distribution of villages across the clan territory, relationship among villages, size and permanence of villages, household morphology and membership, domestic space organization and hierarchies of settlement can be valuable indicators of contemporary relations and changes and transformation of the segmentary lineage societies. In a case study, Schachener (2010) investigated the mutual reinforcement of the formation of the political strategy during the formation of corporate kin groups and settlement pattern of the southwest America, and he concluded, "the transition from residence in dispersed, subterranean pit structure to surface Pueblo composed of contiguous room was linked to the formation of small corporate kin groups, such as extended households or lineage" (Schachner 2010: 473). Hence, the focus of lineage and kinship studies should be transformed to the study of "transition from form to substance, and from structure to process" (Carsten 2004: 36).

### *1.2.3. Inappropriate assumptions*

The notion of complementary opposition, which is a fundamental notion to formulate the fusion and fission dichotomy, was criticized by anthropologists and historians as invalid structural assumption attributed to the segmentary society. According to Henry

Munson, "many anthropologists of the late 20th century dismiss the concept of the segmentary tribe as a relic of antediluvian structural-functionalism" (Munson 1993: 267). The notion of complementary opposition is the most heavily criticized aspect of the theory, right from the beginning. "Segmentation and complementary opposition are very well spread nearly universal features of human organization" (Sahlins 1961: 322). Complementary opposition in a wider context is the presence of competitive social groups or communities that occupy the same or neighboring ecological zone. In most cases, these competitive social units are engaged either in symbiotic relationship (such as in the case of vertical zonation) or in a violent relationship, where one will destroy the other. Thus the presence of complementary segments, social classes or social groups is not peculiar to segmentary society, and thus should not be used as foundation of the model.

Salzman (1978) also compiled several anthropological works that reject Gellner's segmentary analysis, based on complementary opposition, of the Berber tribe in Morocco. Gellner hypothesized that the complementary opposition, military aggregation of several segments hierarchically, of the Berber of Morocco enabled them to inhabit large territory and defend it against French occupation. Salzman however said "the Bedouin act in a fashion contrary to the lineage model … the lineage model is simply incorrect, and elegant folk ideology that has been mistakenly adopted as an analytic sociological model" (Salzman 1978: 67). And he concluded that the complementary opposition does not exist at all as an organizational principle of the society.

Other conceptual misconceptions of the lineage theory include the absence of indigenous concepts adequately integrated in the model, although folk categories were partially involved (Salzman 1978) in unsystematic way. Adam Kuper (1982), the strong critic of the segmentary model, claimed that the lineage model, its predecessor and analogs have no value in anthropological analysis. He gave two reasons to dismiss the utility of the theory; "first the model does not represent folk models which actors anywhere have their own society. Secondly, there do not appear to be any society in which vital political and economic activities are organized by a repetitive series of descent groups" (Kuper 1982: 92). Generally speaking, the lack of indigenous concept in Western understanding of society and history is very much criticized, and is among the main pillars behind the postmodern movement. Peter Schmidt claimed that the dichotomy between the science and history is the structure of Western thought about non-Western societies (Schmidt 1983).

In conclusion, the above mentioned major criticisms of the lineage theory clearly demonstrate the inadequacy of the concepts and assumptions to explain deeper historical or sociological questions. However, the total rejection of the model as invalid and useless is also not a prudent theoretical and methodological choice. Because, the social and ecological fabric of several segmentary society, like the Feqat Harak, is significantly structured along the segmentary system. For instance, the formation of sedentary villages during the first half of the Feqat Harak's history was highly influenced by the lineage segmentation process that took place in the primary segment. So, as rare scholarly voices are echoing (Ensor 2011) the next section will seek the

ways how the shortcomings and pitfalls of the lineage theory can be substantiated by integrating it with the concept of house and community studies.

The concept of house, following Levi-Strauss, will be applied in this research in two ways that are relevant to address a segmentary issue. The first way is related with settlement pattern studies, where a close examination of the distribution of sedentary villages in the clan territory, nature and lineage composition of individual and cluster of settlements … etc are going to be studied. The second way of the concept of house applicable in this research is related with the architectural diversity or house form variability practiced by the Feqat Harak clan, principally in the Nabagade Valley and Qohaito Plateau. The settlement and architectural aspect of my study will go beyond the segmentary nature, and will address critical historical and ecological questions; such as the impact of colonial experience, ecological diversity, introduction of agriculture, and settlement permanence in the changing style and form of architecture in the Valley and the Plateau.

Secondly, community study is directly related to the formation of corporate group that was traditionally considered as the result of only lineage segmentation. Meaning, lineage segmentation was thought to be the primary motive for the formation of social (residential) units in the segmentary society. But a widespread empirical data show that other agent of corporate group formation or community formation exists in segmentary or unilineal societies. The formation of villages in the Nabagade Valley and Qohaito Plateau indicate the fluctuation between lineage driven and economic driven historical trajectories.

## 1.3 'Alternative' or 'Complementary' Approaches: *house and community paradigms*

Paul Bohannan's work, *Tiv Farm and Settlement* (1954), foreshadowed the potential fusion of lineage theory and the concept of house or broadly speaking settlement study. His analysis of the Tiv settlement as neither 'production group' nor 'kinship group' qualifies appreciation in the wake of current anthropological conceptions regarding the inadequacies of lineage theory as analytic tool by itself, and the need to replace it with the 'house' formula. Now majority of studies in segmentary societies broke, at least softened, the opposition between segmentary and unitary, centralization and decentralization, and instead attempt to explain the multiplicity of forms that exist along the spectrum. The intermediary position and processes of complexity in social and political organization dominate current research practices, and this inquiry can be realized by adding several analytical variables to the taxonomy and description based solely on kinship. A wide array of variables is currently in use, but this research utilizes the concepts of community and house as supplementary analytical points to the lineage.

### *1.3.1 Overview*

House is a generic term and concept in anthropology and archaeology. Besides Levi-Strauss' concept of house, which will be dealt in detail later, the notion of house was used in studies in the discipline in many contexts. Symbolic anthropologists particularly studied house and house forms (architecture) to formulate a symbolic relationship among humans, and between humans and nature. Edmund Leach (1958) tried to study the cosmological principles on homestead, villages and fields. Similarly, Brady (1997) wrote an impressive paper on the trilateral relationship among cosmology,

artificial cave and the spatial layout of villages in Pre-Hispanic Mesoameirca. Other symbolic scholars also associated the structural similarities of architecture and human body. “Many writers have recognized the frequent identification, more-or-less explicit, of the house with the human body” (Drucker-Brown 2001: 670). In a similar vein, Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of habitus is highly illustrated by his study on the Kabyle house (Bourdieu 1973).

Historical anthropologists and archaeologists derived their hypothesis and postulates based on their studies on houses and households. Adam Kuper’s (1993) study on Zulu homestead was the basis of his inference on the regional political continuity in Southern Africa in the 19$^{th}$ century. Nicholas David (1971) statistical analysis of Fulani homestead was an impressive study on the correlation between number of huts and adult members in a compound. David Carballo’s article (2011), *Advances in the household archaeology of the highland Mesoamerica*, summarized the application of the household concept in Mesoamerica. He noted that the main areas of study include domestic economies, social composition, ritual … etc. In sum, household study was preferred, especially the sociological dimension, because household is perceived as the basic social unit of society. “Correct identification of the household is fundamental to the inference of larger more abstract social grouping” (David 1971: 13).

### *1.3.2. House versus Lineage*

With the above brief introduction of the concept of house, let us now turn to the specific case of the theoretical and methodological debate between house and lineage. The first full blown attempt to replace the lineage model with the concept of house (Joyce and

Gillespie 2000) echoes the two shortcomings of the lineage theory identified by Kuper (1982). The need for significant incorporation of the indigenous categories, and the search for the practical/actual organizing principles seem to lie at the heart of their attempt to replace the theory with the concept of house. They noted, "the house emerged as an important analytical concept in anthropology in the 1970s due to the vocabularies of kinship failed to adequately characterize social units … and the recognition of heuristic significance of indigenous concepts and terms" (Joyce and Gillespie 2000: 4).

The alternative approach for the anthropological study of tribal or segmentary society, other than the lineage model, is fundamentally based on Levi-Strauss's inversion of the *complementary opposition* into '*complementary filiation*' or alliance theory. It championed the quest for alternative conceptual path, and his new category of 'house society' paved the new direction. The notion of complementary filiation directly opposes the notion of complementary opposition. The former concerns with the relationship different societies or lineage groups have, while the latter concerns with the competitive yet at times collaborative nature of inter-lineage (segment) relationship. Thus, based on the notion of complementary filiation, Levi-Strauss developed the 'alliance theory', and created house societies as social structure to be added alongside the familial taxa of family, lineage and clan. He defined house society as:

> "A corporate body holding and estate made up of both material and immaterial wealth, which perpetuates itself through the transmission of its name; its goods and its titles down a real or imaginary line, considered legitimate as long as this continuity can

express itself in the language of kinship or of affinities and, most often, both" (Joyce and Gillespie 2000: 6).

Compared with the basic frameworks of the lineage theory the above definition significantly revised the way the social makeup and organization of tribal societies is perceived. First the idea of '*corporate*' broadens the attainment of membership in the tribal or house societies through either unilineal descent or non-kin corporate formation who live in the same estate (area). Secondly, the last phrase of the definition indicates that the legitimacy of the corporate group depends on the use of kinship, affinal relations or both. Similar to the above point, this also widens the possibility of the formation of non-kin corporate group, which is quite essential in the examination of the historical process that occurred over centuries in a segmentary system.

Thus, lineage was to be replaced by house (Joyce and Gillespie 2000, Carsten and John-Hughes 1995, Carsten 2004). "The household is the superior domestic context available for defining ethnic affiliation of the resident population of the settlement" (Stanish 1989). One of the critical parameters that need to be investigated, which will lead us to the community study, is the nature of corporate groups. Inquisitive questions include; is lineage segmentation the only agent of group formation or other agents are also involved is a good testing module. For example, there are several types of village compositions among the Feqat Harak settlement system in Qohaito Plateau; some are composed of primary segments including the village of Ab'a; majority of villages constitute primary and secondary segments; and finally one village (Wekeiro) has primary, secondary and tertiary segments.

Similarly, Susan Gillespie (2000) noted that for long the Maya social organization had been wrongly understood as the 'patri-lineage' thought to be an ideal type. She argued that a different approach should be applied to study the nature of social groups and their organization into discrete segments. For instance, how descent was integrated with residence to form corporate groups (Gillespie 2000: 469). She also stressed on the way ancestor veneration is used to define a descent group.

*1.3.3. Approaches and advantages of house studies*

Few collections of approaches of the study of house have been developed in archaeology and anthropology. Ross Samson (1990) identified two trends of contemporary archaeological works in architecture in Britain; "one approach, spatial analysis … representing measuring and analyzing the organization and configuration of space … the other trend is a strand of social theory" (Samson 1990: 2). Glowacki and Vogeikoff-Brogan (2011) developed a wider collection of approaches to study the house and household in ancient Crete in Greece. They enlisted eight separate approaches defining the household as a domain of built environment, social identity, symbol, ritual, composition, industries (production), community, ethnic/cultural identity, and the region (Glowacki and Vogeikoff-Brogan 2011).

Of all the above mentioned approaches of household, the most suitable for historical and ecological analysis of change of architectural form among the Feqat Harak is related to the *industries* (production) *approach* set by Glowacki and Vogeikoff-Brogan (2011). They defined their approach as "the recognition of domestic activity areas

logical record is fundamental to understanding the material, behavioral aspect of households, particularly in distinguishing small-scale (household) production and large-scale (supra-household) production (Glowacki and Vogeikoff-Brogan 2011: 9). In small-scale societies like the Feqat Harak the adaptive strategy of the society tends to play critical role in the continuity and change of the traditional architecture. The historical analysis of the expansion of sedentary villages in the valley and the plateau, the transition along pastoral, horticulture, agro-pastoral and non-agropastoral mode of subsistence thus will be carried out along this orientation.

Advantage of the concept of house is that it offers more empirical bases of analysis. Stanish (1989) noted, the house hold is visible. Visibility in this context refers to the relative advantage of house being easily observable compared to the immaterial and abstract nature of kinship relations. House can be observed, as noted from the above case examples, from many angles of research; social relationship, symbolic behavior, adaptation, ecology and so on. Moreover, the house is lived on daily bases, and this overall increases the empiricism and observability of house in anthropological research.

Patricia Gilman (1987) highlighted that the architectural analysis should become as common and as important as lithic and pottery analysis in the investigation of past human behavior. Her analysis of the transition from pit structure to pueblo house in southwest America was accompanied with "other factors such as population size, subsistence strategies, settlement system and mobility and food storage" (Gilman 1987: 58). Janet Carsten (2004) argued in favor of the replacement of kinship models by house, and justified her claim by saying "kinship is made in houses through the intimate

sharing of space, food and nurturance that goes on within the domestic space" (Carsten 2004: 3). All these suggestions share the idea that household is a concrete and visible subject of study, and hence need to supersede the abstract kinship models.

In archaeological context, Ruth Samson (1990) noted, "the single most important artifact for reconstruction of past society is the house in which people dwell" (Samsom 1990: 1). A dwelling preserves all the material culture that was used by the inhabitants to sustain their livelihood. It acts as a 'wholesale' memory of the activities carried out in it, especially in the cases of cave settlement which have proven tendency of post-depositional preservation. Hence, understanding the house as a physical structure and the household as a social unit (Glowaski and Vogeikoff-Broga 2011) became the top research agenda for anthropologists in this field.

The wider context of African societies displays huge difference in the nature of the village composition and formation of residential group. Adam Kuper noted "there is no evidence for primordial lineage and clan-based societies in southern Africa" (Kuper 1993: 470). He associated the continuity of the historical process of the Bantu expansion to the village and settlement composition, and argued that unilineally related descent group is not the case in Southern Africa. In east Africa, perhaps North Africa too, there are cases where the unilineal descent group might be the case.

Secondly, it is not only the single household that became important for understanding of tribal society. Household aggregation and the overall settlement pattern studies provide substantial application to my research and elsewhere. Following Montmollin, Fox et al,

(1996) argued the replacement of "the simplified formalist evolutionary typologies with settlement pattern indices of degree of stratification, centralization and societal integration" (Fox et al, 1996: 800).

The second element of house and settlement studies that I am going to apply is the architectural types of the Feqat Harak in the Nabagade Valley and Qohaito Plateau. There is a rich architectural variability in the clan territory of the people. Four major architectural types are practiced by the people, and their historical evolution and distribution across the clan territory indicate a gradual patterning of various factors. The four dwelling types (house-forms) are *galba* (rock shelter), *agudo* (hut), *nahsa* and *mereba'e*.

The study of vernacular architecture creates a wide array of thematic investigations because the derivation of architectural form is the function of many factors, and hence invites several fields of study. Suzan Denyer noted "the study of vernacular architecture demands an interdisciplinary approach" (Denyer 1978: 2). This research will study the transition between architectural forms and co-existence of these types by focusing on the ecological and historical factors. Moreover, a detailed research on the historical processes related with cultural contact with neighboring societies, and the impact of Italian colonial period on architectural forms change and continuity will be conducted.

An interesting area of examination will be the geometrical plan of a homestead in different villages and ecological zones. A homestead in the village in Nabagade Valley consists of several dispersed *agudo*s meant for human and animal dwellers. In this

ecological zone, rarely, a homestead consists of some *agudo* and *nahsa* types of houses with a concentric garden circumventing the homestead. This type of homestead is found in the highly sedentary villages, and the presence of garden indicates a horticulture subsistence mixed with pastoral economy existed. In Qohaito, most villages have homestead with a horticulture garden owned by the family, except the village of Wekeiro. In the village of Ab'a, the pattern of homestead-garden relation is quite different. The garden of each family is located that the central court/field of the village, while the homesteads orbit around the communal garden in circular or ring orientation. One of the interesting aspects of Ab'a village is that it is the only village in Qohaito Plateau composed of families belonging to the same primary segment, and thus the overall impact of lineage affiliation, historical trend and ecological factor will be comprehensively studied.

### *1.3.4. Lineage and community*

The search for lineage as if constituted by the logic of descent has proved too rigid and static (Guyer 1981: 93). In the same article, Jane Guyer (1981) argued that a community study should be integrated in the study of segmentary system in Africa. Yvonne Marshall (2002) outlined two kinds of communities; the first type a community defined by the present and are largely about people's relationship to their place of residence; and secondly a community defined by their relationship to the past and to other people (Marshal 2002). She noted that despite both types represent distinct categories, they overlap in practical situation. This distinction is useful to understand the continuity of old ties (past) and the creation of new (present) relations in a given community, and might be related to the continuous movement between corporateness and distinctness.

In similar effort, O'Gorman (2010) developed a 5-level model on the community hierarchies in a tribal society, and using the imagined community he proposed a multiscalar analysis of a tribal society through the "conceptualization of community on identity, agency, social boundary, meaning, and social repercussion" (O'Gorman 2010: 573). His formulation incorporates the recently emerging fields of study that can be loosely categorized as postmodern subfields. The idea of agency particularly is interesting because it shows the mutual constituency of material and immaterial parts of culture. In conclusion he claimed that community is always dynamic, historically and geographically situated, and made up of human relationship.

Two major approaches of community studies in anthropology and archaeology has emerged; *imagined community* (Anderson 1991) and *coalescence community* (Kowalewski 2006). Each approach is highly specialized to study particular kind of society. The former is useful to study large scale urban societies, while the other applicable for small scale and pre-industrial society. The application of the concept of *imagined community* to understand small scale society is quite tricky and needs cautious use. The original application of the concept by Benedict Anderson (1991) was meant to illustrate how mass media bind the imagined community in urban (national) level or large scale societies. This phenomenon does not exist often, or at least the impact is limited, in small scale societies. Scott Hutson's et al, (2008) research on urban centers of Maya society noted "in the absence of data on mass media, we develop a notion of imagined community that is based on the embodied experience of living in a dense society. As of these experiences may not reach the discursive level of imagination" (Hutson et al 2008: 22).

The '*coalescence community*' renders applicable method and philosophical ground to study small scale societies because the features of this type of community are closely linked to the ordinary livelihood of the community members particularly the adaptive strategies. Unlike the imagined communities, coalescent community focus on how smaller settlements aggregate into large nucleated settlement (Birch 2012). Kowalewski (2003) developed the concept of coalescent communities to refer to a cluster of smaller settlements who come (aggregate) in a larger settlement to counter social upheavals and/or external pressure. For him the process of the aggregation smaller settlements include: "the appearance of corporate political structures such as council and confederacies, increasing concern for collective defense, changes in the social means of production, and the cultural transformation that emphasize the integration of domestic groups through sodalities, clans, rituals and settlement layouts designed to promote community integration" (Birch 2012: 117).

The formation of corporate groups among the Feqat Harak fits the coalescent community, especially in some phases of occupation in Qohaito Plateau and nearby slopes. Defense oriented communities emerged during local and large scales of conflict. Hilltop settlements are prevalent in the valley, and the inhabitants claim that hilltop settlements are better location to protect cattle raid or other kind of aggression. Other virtual advantage of the coalescent nature of community in the valley is the easy and efficient mobilization of corporate labor in spate irrigation.

*1.3.5. Community and landscape studies*

The close association of community, geographical set up and history also invites the landscape thought that has become widely used by anthropologist. Fisher and Feinman (2005) summarized anthropologists' view on human – environment (including landscape) relationship as a shift from "reactive to proactive, and then to interactive", and they viewed landscape as a palimpsest where "historically contingent entities that constantly reconfigure human choices and decision making at all scales takes place" (Fisher and Feinman 2005: 3). As they indicated nowadays anthropologists focus on the interactive nature of human and landscape or the reciprocal nature of their relationship (Turner 2005).

Peter Schmidt concluded that change in ecology in Kagera region of Tanzania is "directly linked to the productive economy and the cultural value of its inhabitants … early population remade the landscape" (Schmidt 1997). A similar research that discusses the interaction of community and landscape was published by Elizabeth Watson (2009). Her study on the construction of terrace among the Konso in Ethiopia shows how the terraced landscape stabilize the ecology and increase the social ecological resilience of the people for as long as four centuries.

In the newly emerging concepts, landscape is not viewed as dictating force shaping community livelihood, rather as a counterpart for human activity and agency. So, it is a medium for human interaction and decision making. Ellen Adams (2006) reminded that the term landscape in her approach is not viewed as locale of boundaries but, in its own right, as the setting of myriad social negotiations. The notion of 'friction of terrain' lies

at the heart of James Scott's synthesis of the political and historical interaction of highland and lowland Southeast Asia. He discusses number of variables such as crop selection, center and/or peripheral location, labor organization, liability to taxation, corvee labor and so on to discuss how the 'terrain' factor played a significant role in Southeast Asian people's choice either to flee or to integrate larger political forms of organization in the lowland.

The notion of landscape will be useful in my research in two specific aspects. The first is the effect of landscape variation between Qohaito and Nabagade Valley in creating different sets of social-ecological scenario. One depending on corporate labor for maintaining village (large house) livelihood and other types independent household units. There is a mixture of contrary variables in terms of landscape phenomena and social setting comparatively in Qohaito and the Nabagade Valley. In the Valley, settlement expansion follow mainly lineage segmentation pattern, but still communities depend on collective labor organization. In the plateau, the role segmentation plays in settlement pattern is loose (compared to the other one), but households are more independent. In this respect, I will explore in detail the complex interaction of these elements in shaping the settlement at large.

Secondly, Qohaito is a buffer zone between the sedentary agriculturalists in the highland and the pastoralists in the slope and valley. I will discuss this topic in detail in chapter seven. The main idea is that the intermediary position zone between these two historically, ethnically and culturally distinct societies create a wonderful platform for the emergence of complex relations. If we put the issue in wider context, it is not only

the Feqat Harak who intruded into the Qohaito highland. Two others identical processes took place in northern and southern part of the plateau by the Asa Lesan and Ge'aso lineage groups respectively. In each case a sedentary agrarian community engaged in sets of bilateral socioeconomic relationship with a mobile pastoral community. I will put these three identical processes that occurred in exactly the same period and historical context to demonstrate how the Qohaito Plateau became a negotiating landscape in this set up, and the effect of this relationship to both spheres of economic base.

## 1.4. Research Design of the Dissertation

The research is designed in the frame of area study dealing with the cultural and ecological integrity of the Nabagade Valley and Qohaito Plateau. The geographically bounded scope primarily characterizes the orientation of the research. The research deals with the Feqat Harak clan who occupies the Northern part of the Nabagade Valley and Central Qohaito. The Feqat Harak is bounded by Asa Lesan tribe of the Assaurta to the North, and Dassamo clan to the South. Asa Lesan occupies the Northern part of the Qohaito Plateau, and Dassamo the Southern part of the plateau. Hence, the scope of the research is geographically enclosed to the northern part of Nabagade Valley and Central Qohaito. Thus, although in the discussion the nomenclature Nabagade Valley and Qohaito are predominantly used, the actual reference is to these specific locations of each region.

The research is selectively carried out among the Feqat Harak clan that belongs to the Sileta sub-tribe of the Minifere tribe. The reasons for selecting this particular clan are;

first descent groups who share clearly reckoned common descent, like the Feqat Harak, or with concrete genealogical account is the best analytical unit (scale) in understanding small scale social and historical processes. In some cases, the tribal and sub-tribal association is founded on imaginary ancestry or bond, or through major historical event, but clan level organization offers on factual and concrete genealogical history, and hence ideal for the type of research at hand.

Secondly, the Feqat Harak has unique and regular rituals and veneration cycles patterned on annual calendar. The Feqat Harak has well-articulated genealogical history that ranges 16 generations in depth and exceptional ceremonial regularity that is never seen among other clans. Since, this dissertation digs into the interrelationship among the various social and natural, tangible and intangible aspect of the society, the regularity and pronounced ritual, both public and private types, is a big plus for selecting the clan. Lastly, the Feqat Harak dwells in central Qohaito where the highest concentration and diversity of archaeological and historical remains of the plateau are found. The spatial overlap among the contemporary, historical and prehistorical occupation of Qohaito is an excellent basis (set up) for ethnoarchaeological research.

The main objective of the research is to devise a multi-variate analysis based on the interactive processes of lineage segmentation, house and settlement expansion, and community elements in the formation and spread of sedentary villages from the Nabagade Valley to Qohaito Plateau. O'Gorman (2010) introduced a new technique for the study of tribal society through community formation and environment where he called "multispatial scales with social dynamics" (O'Gorman 2010: 573). Turner (2005)

also made similar move on studying the reciprocal interaction between human and landscape. She suggested that future studies should avoid focusing on one factor (driver) but rather work on "multiple drivers … variable sets that include both biophysical and socioeconomic factors or their surrogates" (Turner 2005). In this research, I will demonstrate that segmentation was not the only factor the Nabagade Valley-Qohaito Plateau expansion but other factors, such as inter-ethnic relationship, ecological and topographic heterogeneity, colonial experience … etc remarkably contributed to the historical process that culminated in the '*repopulation*' of Qohaito Plateau.

The following are some of the fundamental objectives of the dissertation;

- ✓ To explain the historical processes and causal factors operating in the formation of sedentary villages in the Nabagade Valley and later from the Valley to the plateau. The complete (comprehensive) explanation of the process lies at the theoretical, methodological and empirical ability of the research to outline the multiple variables and their actual interconnection (relationship among the variables), and the magnitude of impact each variable plays in the process. The research will liberate the narrow conception and description framed in lineage theory through incorporation of non-kinship variables, primarily house and community paradigms.

- ✓ The rise of complexity or complex societies in the research area within the study period is one of the top objectives embodied in this dissertation. The rise of complex community relationship and human-environment relationship has

multiple dimensions. It includes subsistence transformation from pastoral to agro-pastoral and finally to non-pastoral livelihood characteristics the emergence of complex societies. Also, the emergence of complex community interaction is manifested in the evolution of settlement pattern and dwelling types across the study area. The change of settlement pattern and village and homestead layout from the valley to the slope, then to riverine occupation and finally to plateau carries the evolutionary track leading to the rise of complex societies in the plateau. Similarly, the evolution of different dwelling types shares significant correlation in the recognition of social and ecological complexity. This dissertation envisions formulating the systemic integration of all these factors in the rise of complex communities and inter-community interaction.

- ✓ The dissertation has also a drive to join in the current debate regarding the theoretical and methodological future of lineage theory and its relationship with other analytical variables. It wishes to create an analytical tool or concept where the lineage theory (kinship paradigm) is systematically incorporated with house (viewed as theoretical successor), community and landscape paradigms.

Research question formulated in this dissertation are crafted in such a way to address the objectives stipulated above. The questions set the frame on which the primary data (firsthand information) is organized, and the processes are explored. The following are some of the research questions leading to the data collection and analysis.

- ✓ What is the chronological breakdown of the 400 years long history of the Feqat Harak? On what bases can a systematic periodization of the entire era be constructed, and what kinds of criteria are suitable for constructing the historical phases and chronological outline of the process? Obviously, the necessity of historical breakdown, and the identification of the major events is crucial in order to identify major changes and transformations leading to the progress of expansion. The criteria for suitable construction of temporal division are the serial lineage segmentations; secondly the settlement history of the clan focusing on the formation of villages across the study area. Thirdly, the architectural criterion is also useful to construct valid chronological outline and timescale of the process. Finally, external factors such as colonial encounter, and national and international forces can be appropriate tools for the construction of periods in the process. The dissertation thus prioritizes the construction of valid chronology and temporal divisions of the 400 years long history of the Feqat Harak formation and expansion of sedentary villages in the valley and plateau.

- ✓ Following the construction of the stages of development (process) and chronological scheme, the next important question is; what are the causal factors that affect the formation and spread of sedentary villages? There is a need to sort and adequately explain the kinship related factors (such as segmentation) and non-kinship attributes driving the process, and in what specific historical context did these variables operate?

- ✓ The ecological background along with the topographic plurality of the clan territory must be carefully studied in a refined manner to assess their impact in the process. Ecological set up and environmental conditions with its changes retain significant stake in the complex process, and the preliminary assessment of the empirical data display considerable match and coincidence between major ecological and social phenomena. In other words, the *bi*-ecological set up and diverse topographic characteristics of the research set up and the social fabric will be examined in detail to outline the impact of these variables in the process.

- ✓ What are the defining characteristics of the various types of communities that arose in the process; for instance, how can the pastoral, agro-pastoral and non-pastoral communities be properly be defined and categorized using multiple criteria such as dwelling type, village configuration, spatial layout of the compound, nature and social composition of the family, livestock population, proportion of small and big animals, alternative mechanism of livelihood, and so on?

The research questions will address not only the segmentary aspect of the lineage (like the frequency and skewness of segmentation) but also look deeply into complex (non-linear) variables; such as inter-clan interaction, inter-ethnic relationship, ecological heterogeneity and the impact of colonial encounter in the process of segmentation and settlement expansion. As Jamieson (2005) described the Spanish colonial era introduced a western oriented family system that reduced the corporateness of the lineage while promoting individual (nuclear family) as a basic social and economic unit. Household

specialization and stratification increased as nuclear families became increasingly differentiated. Similarly, in Qohaito since the Italian colonial era until 1991, although the homogeneity of the lineage was kept intact, a chief was appointed by the administration, and this introduced a modern political system. This phenomenon has to be studied in detail, and how it contributed in the formation of new sedentary villages. For instance, the village of Bozo in Qohaito Plateau was first established as the residence of the second chief, and gradually families began to construct their households in the village.

The research questions are framed in a way to both test the existing hypotheses regarding lineage theory and its correlates such as political organization, ritual cycle, territorial organization, settlement pattern, and so on. Some of the existing hypotheses describing the lineage theory include;

- ✓ ecological exigencies to meet resources (Verdon 1983),
- ✓ demographic models (Fox et al, 1989),
- ✓ military and expansion strategies (Sahlins 1961),
- ✓ decentralized political organization (Fortes and Evans-Pritchard 1940).

Most of the hypotheses revolve around the acquisition of resources and new territory in a competitive environment. Marshal Sahlins noted that “the Nuer expansion represent the successful conquest of a particular ecological niche” (Sahlins 1961: 341). This research however sought to broaden the comparative examination of lineage theory in

relation to other analytical concepts especially house, community and landscape studies in a systemic way.

The methodological foundation of the paper rests on the increasing convergence of material and immaterial culture studies, traditionally segregated into archaeology and anthropology respectively. Each discipline underwent methodological change since the 1980s in general, encrypted in repetitive phrases '*beyond interview*' (William Rathje 1978) and '*beyond artifact*' (Stanish 1989). The '*beyond*' style of theoretical and methodological transformations continued in various forms; '*beyond culture/nature*" (Descola 2013), "*beyond kinship*" (Rosemary and Gillespie 2000), which later evolved into "*after kinship*' (Carsten 2004). As the result of the convergence between disciplines and I call for interdisciplinary research, hybrid subfields continue to flourish (social archaeology, ethnoarchaeology, materiality … etc). William Rathje described the hybrid research tool ethnoarchaeology as subfield meant to document patterns in the relation between material and human behavior, and to study the ongoing processes in modern system.

Following the deconstruction of dualism in the discipline, this research seeks to equally involve the material and immaterial culture studies; alternatively be referred as ethnoarchaeology, social archaeology or historical anthropology. These research tools encompass both types of data in a systematic way. Since the fundamental objective of this research is to devise multi-variate (multi-factor) analysis of the process, the holistic nature of these fields supports the proper balance of data collection, organization and analysis. The research primarily adapts the *conjunctive method*' (Fox 1989) or '*holistic*

*systems approach*' (Schmidt 1983). These methods and alike advocate the composite use of oral tradition, ethnohistory, ethnography, and settlement studies to address anthropological issues in historical context. Susan Gillespie (2000) also noted on the need to reconstruct Maya social organization by 'combination of data extracted from archaeological, ethnographic and ethnohistorical data'. Conjunctive method was developed in Maya studies in Mesoamerica, where the existence of diverse nature of data, social and natural, with rich oral tradition, settlement remains and alike convinced researchers to devise the technique that significantly incorporates most or all of these data. The conjunctive method is important not only to complement missing data across the data gathering strategies but to cross check the validity of information accumulated through different data collection means.

The conjunctive method defined the data collection method employed in this research, and was able to generate diverse types of data from several sources of information; oral tradition and ethnohistorical account, archaeological survey of settlements both in contemporary and past sites, ethnographic observation, and travelers' accounts were the main sources of data that I applied/employed. All these data collection methods played significant role in the collection and organization of primary data, and sufficiently supplied the database of the research.

Similarly, the holistic systems approach (Schmidt 1983) presents useful analytical and data gathering technique, because this approach helped the dissertation data collection in a systematic and systemic manner, where every component is viewed as organic counterpart (subsystem) in the whole system. Two character of this analytical technique

are recommendably relevant in this research; systemic orientation, and historicity. The approach is highly influenced by systems theory which argues culture is organized in systemic way, where the functional (organic) components are the sub systems, and a change in one system affects the other interrelated sub systems to undergo corollary adjustment. The historical tendency of the theory is influential in this study, because systems theory explains on how changes occur and the course under which change takes place, and this involves the explanation of the process of change. The systemic view of Feqat Harak's valley to plateau expansion is the best approach to investigate and explain the process, because the process is the result of many interacting factors that can be presented in the form of subsystem of the general process.

The composition of data collection (conjunctive method) and data analysis (holistic systems approach) are applied in the form of diverse data collection strategies; ethnographic observation, interview, archeological survey of settlements (homestead architecture and village plan), oral tradition and genealogical survey, and secondary sources mainly travelers' account written in the early days of the minimal lineage. All these techniques of data collection was carried out during short and long terms fieldworks; August-October 2011, March-April 2012, December 2013-January 2014 and September 2014-July 2015. The last fieldwork especially enabled me to document in detail the ceremonial cycles, seasonal patterns of livelihood and other key feature of the Feqat Harak.

In terms of significance of the research, the dynamics of Valley-Plateau expansion of the Feqat Harak, which I claim lasted four centuries, will contribute in creating new

perspective and fresh knowledge on the social dynamics of the region on many facets. First, it will improve the traditional highland-lowland approach into a detailed multi regional scheme by illustrating the intermediate zone (valley). Secondly, the ability to understand the intermediary zone further leads to better understanding of the emergence of complex societies or complex socio-ecological system. Harrower et al, (2010) proposed that the transition from pre-agriculture to agriculture should be studies in sub-regional complexities, and they designated the southern Red Sea region as a potential location for such researches. They carried out research in Yemen, and I believe the region that I am studying is a direct counterpart of their study region, and hence carries similar relevance. This is not to equate this research by any means to their research, but the research subject and the ecological setting share fundamental similarity.

# Chapter Two

## *The Research Area: Social and Ecological Setting of Nabagade Valley and Qohaito Plateau*

The research area covers the two upper altitudinal/ecological zones of the clan territory of the Feqat Harak. The entire clan territory can be classified into distinct zones based on two different approaches; ethnolinguistic categorization of the territory used by the people (indigenous), and the land use patterns derived from ethnographic observation. The ethnolinguistic, perhaps cognitive as well, way of categorizing the topographic and ecological diversity is structured into three subunits. It includes the *ziban* (highland), Nabagade Valley, and *tahti* (lowland) ecological subunits. These three folk categories exist in the daily expression of the people, and careful examination of subsistence activities and land use patterns indicate that these three folk zones are distinct domains. The other approach of territory classification is based on the land use pattern organized on the vertical ecological zonation of the clan territory, and accordingly four distinct subsistence activity spheres can be identified. The *highland*, *mid-altitude*, *coastal lowland*, and the *coast and islands* are the four micro-ecologies routinely utilized by the inhabitants in annual cycle. A wonderful match between the seasonal availability of ecological resources across the clan territory and the transhumance movement pattern of the people exist, principally governed by the swapping rainy seasons in the lowland and plateau.

The diversity of the vertical ecological zones, with 2700 meters altitudinal variation, along the clan territory presents an interesting set up for many anthropological research

topics; such as the rise of complex communities, social-ecological relations, the role intermediary ecological zones in regulating annual subsistence patterns, and so on. This research is primarily interested in the socio-ecological conditions of the Nabagade valley as intermediary zone in shaping settlement in the area, and in regulating the annual pattern of livelihood of the people. This objective decisively determines the selection and organization of the research area. Thus, this dissertation aspires to concentrate on the two upper ecological zones of the clan territory; Nabagade Valley and Qohaito Plateau focusing on the historical process of the formation and expansion of sedentary villages.

Previously, some researchers on Saho society wrongly categorized the people's settlement pattern into a neat highland and lowland category. They dismiss the existence of intermediary topographic and ecological subunits between the two altitudinal ends of the territory. Morin's (1995) classification on the Assaurta tribe was framed into Assaurta *agani* (mountain/highland) and Assaurta *gubi* (plain/lowland). And, based on this dichotomy he tried to explain the different livelihood (subsistence) pattern of the tribe. This type of categorization into bound highland and lowland classes underestimates the high rate of pastoral mobility the Saho tribes practice yearly. Secondly, the highland-lowland dichotomy ignores the existence of a medial (intermediary) ecological zone between the highland and the lowland. The Di'ot plain for instance is a mid-altitude region (approximately 1200 meters above sea level) with an extensive agricultural field of the Assaurta tribe located in the River Hadas Valley, and plays identical role as Nabagade Valley does for the Feqat Harak. Thus, the research area designed for this dissertation widens the ecological and topographic taxa

of the clan territory, and secondly explores the ignored but essential part of their diverse micro-ecology.

This chapter looks in the social-ecological setting of the Nabagade Valley and Qohaito Plateau – the human and natural set up of the area. The first section details the ecological aspect of the Nabagade Valley and Qohaito Plateau and will present the geographical characteristics and the availability of seasonal resources along with the exploitation pattern of the people. The second section comprises a general note on the Saho ethnolinguistic group with a special focus on the ethnogenesis, settlement pattern, social organization, veneration ceremonies, and rites of passage. These topics are relatively new items in the study of Saho society except the ethnogenesis. The reason this chapter discusses the ethnogenesis is to present new synthesis based on new commentary and research findings. The comprehensive ethnographic description of the people is highly recommended in order to provide detail information so that the readers will be to able reinterpret the data presented in this dissertation. Section three goes into the summary of previous anthropological research carried out among the Saho people. It will critically survey the nature and topical interests of previous studies and the reasons leading into such studies. Finally, the last section will review the previous archaeological and ethnographic studies carried out in the research area, and will justify the necessity of the current research.

## 2.1. Ecological Setting of the Study Area

Following Marcus (1992), Ellens (2006) argued that there are two ways to define a region, "a mental concept on part of the inhabitants, and a reality that exist in space"

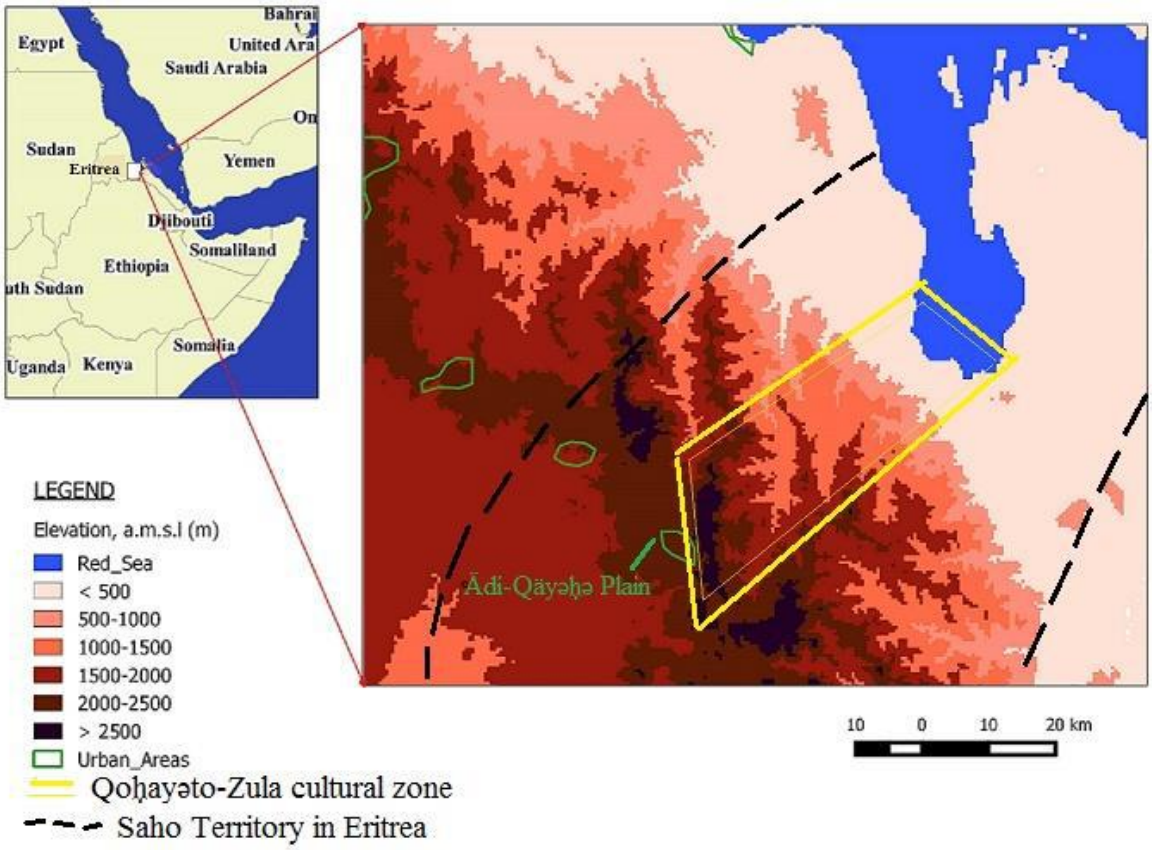
(Ellens 2006: 4). The Nabagade Valley and Qohaito Plateau exist in both the mental and ethnolinguistic category (construct) of the inhabitants, and in the actual livelihood and land use pattern that I have observed over the years of my fieldwork. The major difference between the two ways of micro-ecological classification is the number of discrete ecological units; three in indigenous, and four in land use observation. Regardless of the variation, however, both parts of the clan territory studied in the dissertation are represented in each category. The following section will introduce the research area in detail.

### *2.1.1. Qohaito Plateau*

Qohaito Plateau is a small part of the extensive north-south aligned mountainous terrain that cuts across three countries in the Horn of Africa (Eritrea, Ethiopia and Sudan) (Map 2.1). The general plateau (Qohaito) drops from its eastern edge several thousand feets to the strip of lowland lying between it and the Red Sea, on the north towards the Nile Basin of the Nile, on the west and south to that of the Abai or the Blue Nile (Parkyns 1966: XV). The Qohaito Plateau is located at the southeastern part of Eritrea, and covers a total of 32km$^2$ area (Wenig and Curtis 2008), and 84km$^2$ circumference (CARP 2007). Several valleys circumvent the Qohaito Plateau; Subiraso in the north, Sanako in the south, Hadas in the west and Nabagade streams in the east.

Qohaito plateau has a dry savanna climatic condition with rainy season in summer ranging from June to August. The rainy season of the plateau is caused by the South East Trade (SET) wind. It gives summer rain to the largest part of the country from west direction. Qohaito plateau is located at the eastern frontier of the continental rain belt

that starts from the Gulf of Guinea in West Africa all across central and eastern part of the continent. The intensity and amount of rain decrease as the trade wind blows from west to east direction. Qohaito Plateau is the eastern end of the tropical rain belt, and receives average annual rainfall of 500mm (MoLWE 2005). Due to high erosion rate, poor vegetation cover, and rocky geomorphology, the plateau has thin soil profile of loamy and sandstone type, which compared to other types, renders less productive soil.




Map 2.1: Topographic Map of the Research Area

Summer cultivation, June to August, is the predominant economic activity. The inhabitants cultivate cereal crops such as wheat and barley. Wheat and barley are the most widely cultivated crops in the plateau because the local bread and porridge is

prepared from these grains. In addition to the family diet, the crops yield large amount of fodder. Compared to the legumes, wheat and barley are less resistant crops to fluctuations in the rainfall distribution. Cultivating both crops requires a uniform distribution of rain throughout the summer, and minor irregularity of rain results in little or no harvest. The ideal rain pattern for a satisfactory harvest for wheat and barley is a constant rain between late June, and late August (at least ones a week or ten days) with sufficient sunny days between consecutive raining days.

Other crops cultivated in the plateau include peas, lentils and beans. The legume crops require less labor, amount and regularity of rain, and the sowing period is after the rainy period ends, usually the latter half of August. This makes cultivating legumes easier for the inhabitants by enabling them to accurately predict the end of the summer. Legumes can grow and ripe merely by the water stored in the thin soil layer, and the low evaporation rate in the plateau enhances longer storage of water in the subsurface. Despite relatively easy productivity, legumes are not widely consumed by the Saho society, and often are sold in the nearby towns for a reasonable price.

Pastoralism is the second most important subsistence activity in the Qohaito. Majority of the families in the highland keep varieties of small and large livestock for different purpose. Cattle, sheep/goat, chicken, and donkey, and seldom camel are raised and kept for plough, diary supply, commercialization, pack animals and long distance travelling. The average herd size per family can be presented as 3-4 cattle, 10-15 sheep/goat, 2 donkeys and a set of chicken (about 20). Families can keep this herd size sedentarily in the plateau but if they possess greater number of animals, then the family need to

migrate in winter, November to March, to the coastal plains for adequate graze and water.

After the completion of harvesting in November-December, two kinds of seasonal migration are commonly practiced. Transhumance is the first type of seasonal migration where some members of a family migrate to the other micro-ecological zones for pasture. The rainy season of the lowland usually spans between November and March. The second type of seasonal migration is non-pastoral in nature and shorter in duration. In this mode of migration the male adult members of a family go to work in the cash crop fields in the valley below the plateau. Villages like Eshika and other villages located in the slope and valley are famous for cash crop cultivation; vegetables, fruits and tobacco plant.

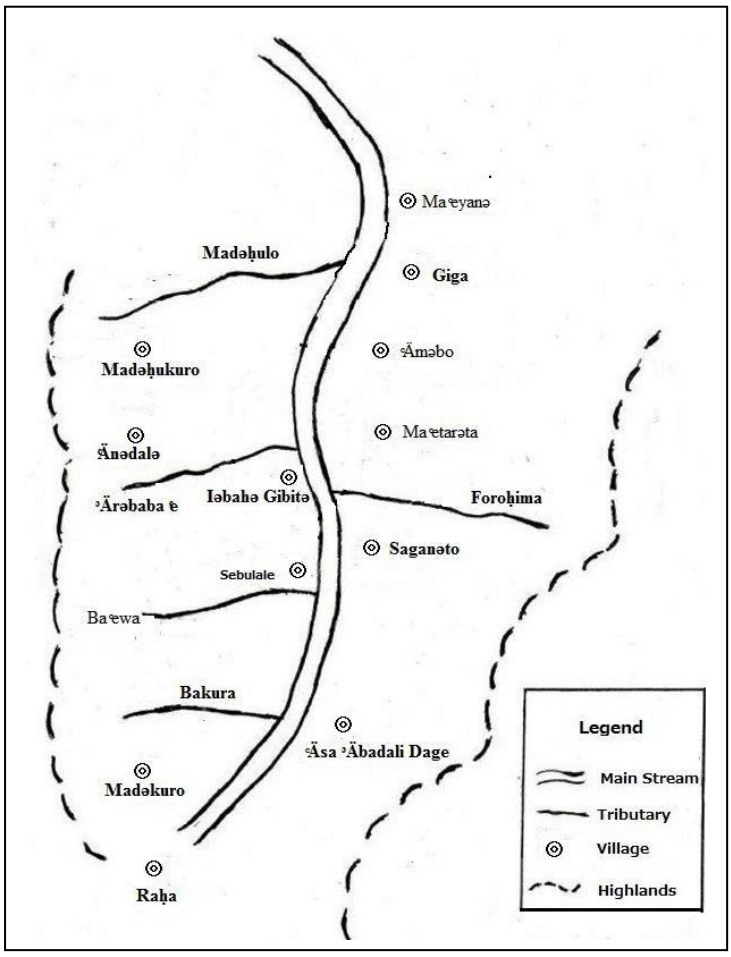
Besides summer cultivation and pastoralism, families who live in the plateau engage in diverse forms of economic activities to supplement their income. Craftworks, such as basketry and bead works, and petty trade including firewood collection and small scale poultry are frequently practiced by women. Bee farming, wage labor in construction works, stone quarrying, food for work projects, retail shops, and civil works (teachers, administrative personnel, site guards etc) are among common jobs assumed by men in the plateau.

### *2.1.2. Nabagade Valley*

Nabagade Valley forms the upper course of the River Kom'ali, which drains from Qohaito Plateau and Soira Mountain range to the Gulf of Zula (Red Sea). The terrain is

characterized by deep valley, gorges, steep slopes, meandering river beds and discontinuous patches of flat terrain along the banks of the small tributaries. The Nabagade Valley has about five major tributaries (streams); Bakura, Ba'ewa, Arbaba'e, Forohima and Madhulo, and numerous smaller streams such as Sebulale. A relatively extensive land within the Nabagade Valley is located at Garadaf Plain, which is estimated to be 4km long with 1.5km width. These different topographic locations are used for various purposes; the banks of the rivers for seasonal cultivation; the hilltops for settlement; and the slopes for grazing.

The Nabagade Valley is characterized by hot and dry climatic conditions with an annual rainfall below 500mm (MoLWE 2005). Since the valley is located at the base of the eastern slopes (escarpment) of the Qohaito Plateau and Soira Mountain range, where the tributaries enter their middle course, the area receives adequate flush flood from the plateau. And the slow velocity and broader banks of the streams enable the farmers to use river diversion techniques to water their fields. Normally, the rivers flow two periods of a year; briefly in spring (March-April) and throughout summer (June-August). Long cycle crops, such as maize and sorghum, are widely cultivated in this zone with little fruits and vegetables as cash crop supplement. Wheat, barley or legume crops are not cultivated in this zone due to high air temperature conditions. Unlike the plateau, the Nabagade Valley has thick soil profile of alluvial and fluvial deposits that are found throughout the foot of the slopes. The thick soil renders comparatively fertile land, and the ability to preserve water for long period is greater than that of the plateau. Despite the semi-dry climate of the area, the plain has relatively better soil fertility, and hence is productive for drought resistant crops such as maize and millet.




Map 2.2: Distribution of Villages in the Nabagade Valley

Spate-irrigation in the banks of the tributaries is the cultivation technique in the valley. The river flow twice a year; March to April, and June to August. Spate irrigation requires the construction of diversion wall, canals, ditches, defensive wall, digging wells, and need constant maintenance. Hence, it depends on communal labor mobilization among several families whose agricultural fields are located adjacent to each other and watered from the same tributary and canal. This constitutes corporate labor management invested by multi-family units to construct and maintain the spate irrigation infrastructures.

The rugged terrain nature of the valley with deep inaccessible gorges leads to the low population density. It is common to see a cluster of three to four families forming a village. Hamlets and villages are located near the banks of the streams, and inhabited on semi-sedentary or sedentary bases. There is however spots of extensive land (fields) where dense population distribution is found. Garadaf Plain is a good example. Compared with the nearby regions, the Nabagade Valley has high population density, and during my fieldwork 112 households (both nuclear and extended types) dwell in the banks and adjacent hills. Most settlements in the riverine villages are occupied by a cluster of families. And a unique kind of land holding exists in the Nabagade Valley.

Unlike land ownership based on 'usufruct' practiced among Saho society, agricultural land in the Garadaf plain is owned on hereditary basis, which asserts permanent land ownership. This hereditary ownership of land sheds an interesting clue to the beginning of agriculture in the area. In Ma'etarta village, for instance, the hereditary agricultural fields continued for four generations. In other words, the current generation counts the fourth linear generation occupying the hereditary agricultural land in the history of the village, and deducting the previous three generation of farmers into an average 75 years could be the time when agriculture began practiced in the village or pan-village level. This account corresponds significantly with the chronology of *Ziyari Tena* ritual initiated by Qadi Abdela during Italian colonial period. Moreover, the land share per family increasingly shrank across generations, and this could be a factor for the diversification of subsistence activities among the inhabitants, and a complementary factor contributing to the valley to plateau migration. Other factors that catalyze the

migration include access to social services, overseas remittance sources, drought (such as the one in 2008), and so on.

Collective land ownership and corporate labor in managing the agricultural land reinforce each other. Regardless of which caused the other, the contemporary farming practices proves difficult for an individual family, even extended one, to autonomously adapt to the environment because the agricultural technique is heavily based on river diversion, which depend on corporate labor. Thus, comparison of the agricultural activities in the plateau and valley displays fundamental social-ecological differences. In the plateau families tend to be more independent, and manage and regulate their farm activities, except pasture land issues. Agricultural activities in the valley however require corporate management by neighboring families in tilling, watering, defensive wall construction, leveling and digging hole (drinking water).

## 2.2. The Saho Ethnolinguistic Group

Modern day Saho speaking society apparently live in all climatic and geographical zones of Eritrea stretching from Red Sea coast, coastal plains, foothills of the eastern escarpment, the highlands and the Western Lowlands. I. M. Lewis outlined the boundary of Saho territory as "they (Saho) occupy an area limited to the north by the Massawa–Gindae road to the south by the valley of Mai Muna and Endeli to the West by the lofty scarps of the Ethiopian Highlands and to the east by the Dankalia plains of Samoti and Wangabo" (Lewis 1955: 174). This extensive geographical location draw them in contact with three ethnic groups in Eritrea; Tigre, Tigrinya and Afar (Pollera

1935). This extensive territory of the Saho speaking communities is divided along tribal lines.

The tribal division of Saho territory, according to Francis Nadel[3] (1946), is divided into three major tribal zones. In his description, the Assaurta lives in area located between River Hadas and River Selima, the Minifere in foothills enclosing the Wangabo plain, Soira and upper Dandero, and the Hazu live in Lower Endeli and Renda Kono and the edge of Dankalia plain (Nadel 1946). The Saho territory expanded westward during the Italian and British administrations, during which many ethnic groups had the chance to expand and extend across the southern and western frontier of their territory. Pollera reported the expansion of Saho during Italian period as follows; "But over the last 10 years, they have gone beyond Belesa and have begun to take their herds into the vast plain of Seieba, and to go down the valley of Mereb spreading themselves on both the Eritrean and the Ethiopian banks, as far as Adiabo and Zaid Akkolom'' (Pollera 1935: 165). During the early stages of the Eritrean war of independence, the Ethiopian army conducted frequent atrocities in civilian settlements in Saho territory. The Saho communities suffered widespread atrocities, and this led to the disintegration of many Saho villages westward, and hence new settlements were created in the western lowland (border with Sudan). Finally, regarding the Saho territory, Abdelkader Saleh

[3] Frederick Nadel (Professor of Anthropology in LSE, and Lieutenant-Colonel in British Army) was the served as a governor as British adminstrator in Eritrea and Sudan. He studied at LSE under Malinowski along with Meyer Fortes, and began fieldwork in Nigeria in 1933, and was appointed as government anthropologist in Anglo-Egyptian Sudan and conducted fieldwork in Nuba. Later, he was appointed in the office of native Affairs in the British Military Administration of Eritrea. In 1944 he returned to England produced academic work on the Nuba and Eritrea. After he returned to England he got teaching positions in LSE and other universities.

Mohammad noted that there are few scattered Saho clans in Sudan, and a tribe (Irob) in Northern Ethiopia.

During my field work, I tried to collect information about the tribal settlement outline of the Saho, and the geographical extent of the major tribes. The northern frontier of the Saho territory can roughly be demarcated as a belt running from the towns of Segheneiti, Mai Habar and Gindae. Desamo tribe occupy the Segheneiti town in the highland, while the edge and the northern part of the escarpment as far as coastal town of Foro, is inhabited by the Tor'a tribe. Starting from the Qohaito Plateau to the mountain Soira range, in the major towns like Adi Keih and Senafe, we find Ga'aso, Debri Mela and Hazo. Assaorta tribe, which is the largest tribe, dwells in vast area that extends from the edge of Soira mountain range down to the coastal plains that border with the Afar people in Dankalia. South of Hazo across the border with Ethiopia the Irob tribe lives including the major towns like Zalambesa. Finally, in Western part of the Saho tribes several sub-tribes live in Tsorona town and the plain of Hazemo.

### *2.2.1. Language*

The Saho language belongs, together with Afar and Somali among others, to the lowland branch of Easter Cushitic language sub family. The word Saho preserves the genetic similarities with the sister languages as well as the predominant pastoral mode of subsistence the people have pursued for centuries. Mohammad (2013) associated the shared linguistic origin of the Saho and Somali languages. According to him, Saho is derived from a combination of words 'Saa' and 'hoo', while the word Somal from 'Soo' and 'maal'. In each of these languages, the first word mean 'to go' and 'animal', and the

latter mean ‘to milk’ and ‘nomad’ respectively. Hence, the ethnonym of the languages share morphological and lexical commonalities that connote pastoralism and pastoralists or human-animal relationship.

Saho language’s close linguistic similarity with the Afar language has led many scholars to consider the Saho as the northern extension of the Afar (Killion and Connell 2011), and other went as far as considering the Saho as an integral part of the Afar. Recently, Andrezej Zaborski (2009) comparatively studied the closer similarity of the Afar and Saho languages within the broader category of Afro-Asiatic/Hamitosemetic language phylum. One of the interesting findings of his comparative study is the fact that the verbal system of Saho and Afar retained the archaic features of Afro-Asiatic languages phylum compared to other languages in the group; especially the Beja. He then labelled the Saho and Afar the ‘Akkadian of Cushitic’.

The first written source of the word “Saho” was published (in its predecessor form) in James Bruce’s book, *Travels: between the Years1765 and 1773, through part of Africa, Syria, Egypt and Arabia into Abyssinia to discover the source of the Nile* (1806). Soon after him many travelers in the 19th continue to mention the ethnic group and some of the tribes in their account. There were several predecessor appellations of the word Saho such as “Shiho”, “Shoho” and “Schoho”. Meaning, the word ‘Saho’ appeared in the 19th Century works in different forms[4]. Various reasons can be brought to the fore as causes of the multi-appellation for the term Saho. The first reason could be related to the

[4] The incorrect way of appellation was also common for the tribes of the Saho. For instance some writers described ‘Asaurta’ as ‘Hazorta’ and so on.

mistranscription of the name by European travelers, and the absence of writing system[5] might have contributed in this case. It is also possible that the local non-Saho informants of these travelers might have contributed to the terminological difference. Abdelkader Mohammad wrote "He (Henry Salt) called the Saho "Shiho" an expression used by the Tigrinya informants to collect information about the Saho" (Mohammad 2013: 34).

Secondly, the dialect difference existing within the Saho language can also be a factor in the multiplicity of the appellation. It is quite common among contemporary speakers to have variable appellation for some tribes. For instance the Feqat Harak clan is variously referred as 'Bet Faqi', 'Faqi Harak', and 'Feqad Harak' (www.allsaho.com). In addition to the dialectical variation, the genetic similarity of the Saho with Afar language can also affect the way the ethnic group is called. Morin noted the ethnonym Saho is probably linked to the Afar verb 'sahha' (to be refreshed), referring to the mountainous zone 'Saahot hangul' from where the Saho traditionally move towards the coastal grazing land in winter" (Morin 1995). Finally, the seasonal migration to a wide geographical area and inter-ethnic relationship can be associated with the poly-nomenclature of the Saho. For instance the Saho migrants to the northern hills of Eritrea (Sahel region) are referred by the word 'Sab-laaleet' by the Tigre ethnic group, and those who migrate to Sudan by the name 'Seeho' (Mohammad 2013).

[5] The Saho recently adopted the Latin based orthography.

*2.2.2. Ethnogenesis*

The linguistic studies of the Eastern Cushitic languages often concentrated on the history and ethnogenesis of these societies due to the absence of written record that led historians to reconstruct their history from linguistic evidences. Closer review of the existing literature on Saho language and history indicates that scholars can be grouped into two general categorical narratives. The first narrative, *antique synthesis*, held by Pollera (1996), Mohammad (2013) among others suggests the emergence of the Saho language and society in the present day territory at least by 1st MBC. Majority of the evidences for this narrative come from linguistic, oral tradition and genealogical information. Alberto Pollera, for example, mixed epigraphic data in Himyar (Yemen) and oral tradition of some Saho tribes (Hazo, Tor'a, and Ga'aso) to generalize the origin of Saho language (and people) in the 1st MBC's cultural contact between Southern Arabia and Horn of Africa.

I want to expand this argument by incorporating the implication of the well documented ancient name of Adouli or Adulis to the Saho language. Adouli (contemporary Adulis) is the ancient port city in the Gulf of Zula, whose reference was written as early as 1st CAD's monumental book of the *Periplus of Erythrean Sea* and *Christian Topography* (6th CAD). Many commentators of these ancient texts believe that the name Azoli or Adulis has Afar root, or Saho in the case of Mohammad (2013). John McCrindle (1853) for instance commented "Adouli, it is known for certain, received its name from a tribe so designated which formed part of the Denakil[6] shepherds who are still found in the neighborhood of Annesley Bay, in the island of Diset" (McCrindle 1853: 46).

[6] The word 'Denakil' is used synonymously with 'Afar'.

This comment is striking and carries valuable insight in the reconstruction of the ethnogenesis of Saho and their relationship with the Afar. First of all, Afar (Saho) origin of the word 'Adulis', substantiated by the ancient texts, concretely demonstrate that the coastal area and the islands were inhabited by Afar/Saho speaking society by the late 1st MBC or the turn of the era. Secondly, some scholars, as recent as the 19th C, tend to encounter difficulty to clearly differentiate Saho and Afar languages due to the overwhelming linguistic similarities and high degree of isoglosses. Hence, putting these points into proper consideration, the reference to Afar might actually mean to Saho. Recently, Mohammad gave the nomenclature of Adulis an exclusive Saho origin. "The name Adulis is a corruption of the Saho word 'ado – lei', which means 'clear water' or 'sea water' (Mohammad 2013: 166). He also highlighted that there is a village called 'ado-lei' among the Saho settlers of the southern highland of Eritrea. This piece of information regarding the ancient nomenclature indicates that the ethnogenesis of the Saho society and their settlement in Zula-Qohaito belt have more antiquity.

Besides the nomenclature of Adulis, the ancient texts provide some reference, indirectly, to Saho communities' occupation in the territory. *The Periplus of Erythrean Sea* and *Christian Topography* present description, copied from Greek inscription in Adulis, that Ptolemy Euerugates (3rd CBC) occupied the Gulf of Zula (Adulis) and its inshore territory from a society described as troglodytes (cave dwellers). The Ethiopian troglodytes were, according to Agatharchides (2rd CBC Greek writer), herdsmen with their separate chiefs or princes, and in the wet season they migrate with their herd to caves, and when weather becomes favorable they go to the valley (Heeren 1832). This

description indicates that the ancient troglodyte settlers of the Gulf of Zula and its immediate hinterland were pastoral communities who seasonally migrate between the valley and plateau to graze their herd. Agatharchides referred these societies as 'Bisharies', and 18th C travelers Burckhardt and Bruce described them as follows;

> "The Bisharies, who rarely descend from the mountain, 'says Burckhardt are a very savage people. Their only cattle are camels and sheep … their language is different from the Arabic, and approaches Abyssinia. They are divided into four tribes, which often are at war with one another for the possession of their pasturage. Their color is a dark brown. Their women are handsomely formed with very fine eyes and teeth and are of a frank disposition. They are genuinely aboriginal people of Africa. Burkhart and Bruce have mentioned some of their tribes by name, the Shiho, and the neighbors Hazorta, who according to the latter are said to be copper, still in their caves, still cloth themselves in goat skin and still rove with their herd from one part of the mountain to the other … plain of Atbara … lower Tacazze … saw little dhourra[7]" (Makhram 1869: 315 – 316).

The above description leads to a conclusion that the occupation of Saho society in their present day territory has a long historical root. The movement from the plateau to the lowland and cave/rock shelter habitation are peculiar to the Saho speaking communities rather than to the Afar. There is hardly any archaeological, historical or ethnographic evidence showing Afar society's regular movement between the highland and lowland

[7] Dhourra is an Arabic term for sorghum.

seasonally or a substantial record of cave uses by the Afar. And thus the reference goes suitably with Saho speaking communities than the Afar.

Similarly, the cave and rock shelter uses described in the ancient texts and modern day commentary sheds significant association with contemporary Saho cave and rock shelter dwelling practices. During my fieldwork in Qohaito, I came across different types of caves and rock shelter uses by the contemporary Saho inhabitants of Qohaito Plateau. The function of the caves and rock shelters include family dwelling, animal pen, caches (haystack), temporary camp site, and burial and ritual site.

The second narrative of the ethnogenesis of the Saho, argued by Connell and Killion (2011) and others, suggests that the Saho speaking society emerged or migrated to the Gulf of Zula and its vicinity in $11^{th}$ CAD due to the collapse of Axumite Kingdom. Connell and Killion wrote "they (Saho) seems to be the northern extension of the Afar people who moved along the eastern shore of the Gulf of Zula and into the foothill of Akele Guzai during $9^{th}$ – $12^{th}$ centuries AD" (Connell and Killion 2011: 457). Although this hypothesis seems sound in some ways, the time scale and historical coincidence that supports this synthesis seems less scientific and more speculative. The assumption to synchronize the historical phenomena of the fall of Axumite Empire and the Arab invasion of the Gulf of Zula with linguistic evidence lacks proper syncretism. Or the model was simply the duplication of similar historical event, 'Beja expansion', in the western and northern parts of Eritrea precisely at the same time and in the same historical context.

*2.2.3. Ethnic territory and settlement pattern*

The Saho tribes have a unique design of settlement pattern that situates them in a strategic location to benefit from multi-ecological zones and seasonally patterned climatic conditions (Map 2.3). Secondly, the settlement pattern of the Saho also allows them to play an intermediary role between the Abyssinian highland and the Red Sea coast with significant command in the trade route. In terms of ecological diversity, almost all Saho tribes possess a tribal territory beginning one end at the Red Sea coast and the other end at the highland. Meaning, the Saho territory is divided into east-west oriented narrow slices of tribal territory, where all tribes possess multi-ecological territory vertically aligned between the Gulf of Zula and Southeastern Highlands of Eritrea. This pattern of tribal territory division entitles every tribe to get access to a wide array of ecological resource structured in a seasonal nature.

This '*ecological totality*' type of settlement pattern of the Saho is unique and special type of settlement pattern that is never to be found in other parts of the region or among other ethnolinguistic groups. In other parts of the region, the altitudinal range of the mountainous zone is divided at least between two ethnolinguistic groups in vertical zonation, where one dwells in the lowland and the other in the highland. For instance, north of the Saho territory, the mountainous region is divided between Tigre and Tigrinya, and further north between Beja and Tigre ethnolinguistic groups. Hence, the Saho people occupy the entire belt of the altitudinal zone; about seventy miles in range between the coast and the highland.

Besides the ecological totality of the Saho territory, the other apparent advantage of the settlement pattern of the people is related with the commanding position on the commercial route between the Red Sea coast and Abyssinia. Crawfurd J. noted, "the tribes I mentioned last (Saho) that seclude Abyssinia from the Red Sea occupy a strip of land along its coast of 70 miles to 100 miles in breadth" (Crawfurd 1868: 283). Hence, from their initial occupation until the end of the 19th century, the Saho controlled the trade route between the Abyssinian highlands and the international commerce in the Red Sea coast. "A powerful tribe of Shiho, now divided into two branches … through their country pass all the roads now in use from Abyssinia to Massawa … the road for fifty miles is in their undisputed possession" (Hotten 1868: 209). The territorial command of the trade route enabled the Saho to benefit from the regional trade network by engaging in escorting and way-leading and other activities in the caravan trade around River Hadas (Crawfurd 1867 and Hotten 1868), and sometimes provided them access to plunder (Blanc 1869).

The strategic location at the cross-road of the trade route was not always beneficial. It also exposes the Saho tribes to be subjects of higher political forms at the coast (Turkish emissary in Massawa) and the highlands (mostly the Tigrean[8] chiefs). As are result, the tribes constantly live in defiance to the king in Abyssinia and the representatives of Ottoman dynasty in Massawa. This led to the frequent outbreak of small and large scales conflicts, and active cattle raid expeditions, especially since the second half of the

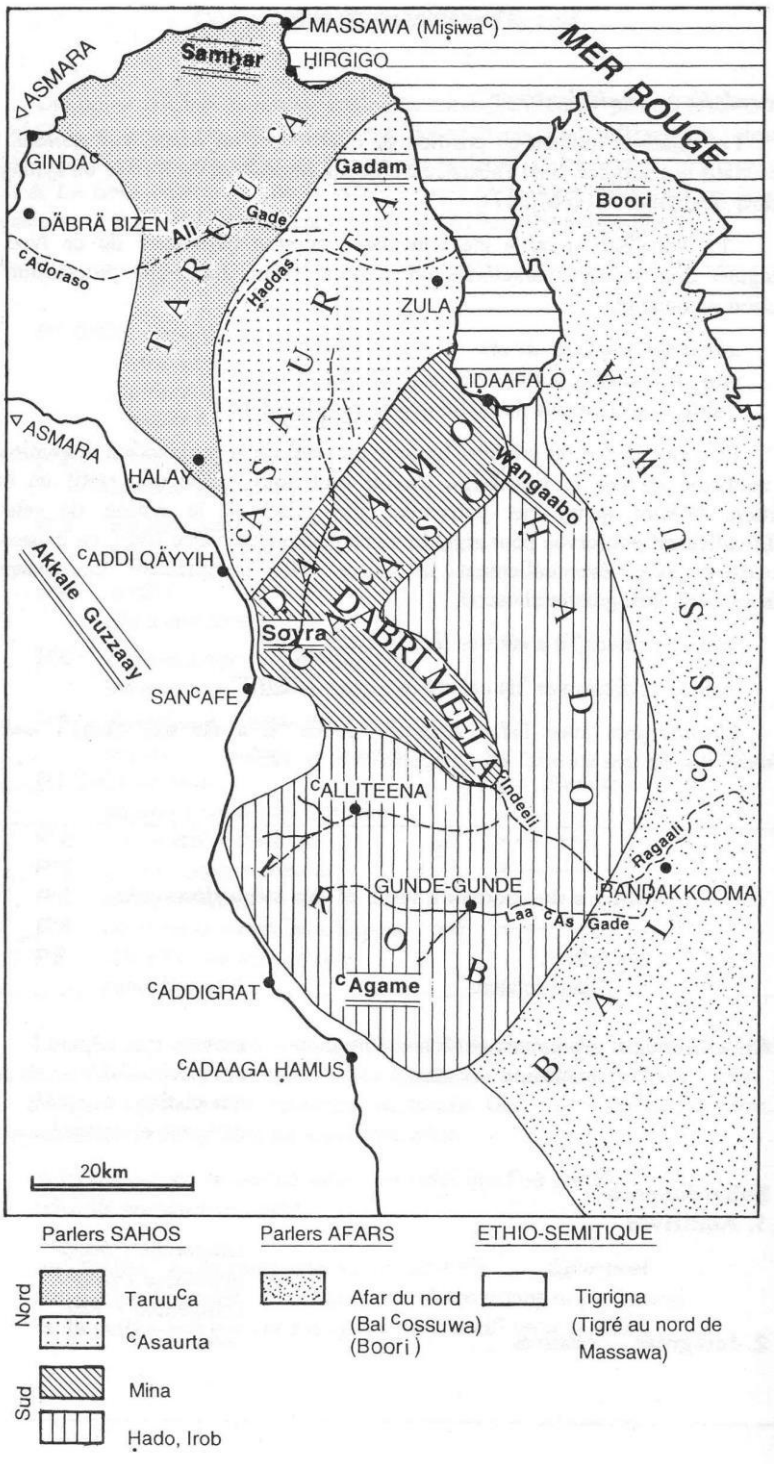
[8] Tigray is a province in Ethiopia, and the inhabitants are referred as Tigreans and their language Tigrinya (also spoken in Eritrea). It should be noted that this is different from Tigre ethnic group and language. So, in this chapter the word Tigrean refers to the inhabitants of the Tigray province of Ethiopia.

18th Century. James Bruce, in his book, reported the then recent event of uprising by the three Saho tribes against the Nayb[9] administration in Massawa.

The geo-political shift occurring in the late 19th century in the region began to exert considerable impact in the future of the trade route between. The key players in the new geo-political circumstances were the regional and international powers; Egypt, Tigrean Emperors, and Italy. The regional powers, which by then had significant influence in the highland, were the Egyptian and Tigrean forces. Both the Tigreans and the Egyptians were competing to control the central highland of Eritrea, and this led to several battles which ultimately gave way for stronger interference of the Tigrean emperor in the region. Ras Alula[10] defeated the Egyptian forces at the battles of Gundet and Gurae in 1875 and 1876 respectively. After defeating their Egyptian rivals and their local allies, Ras Allula established his strong control in his newly occupied province in the highland with a new commercial and political capital city – Asmara – in 1884.

[9] Nayb is the title of Ottoman Turk's representatives in Massawa (emissaries) who functioned as tax collectors.

[10] Ras Alula was one of the top military commanders of Emperor Yohans IV of Tigray, and was in charge of Yohans IV force in Central Eritrea.




Carte n° 2 : Les parlers sahos

Map 2.3 *Ecological totality* pattern of Tribal territory showing every tribe's access to the highland and the sea (Map from Morin 1995)

In the Red Sea coast, the Italians began to encroach in 1869, when an Italian company bought concession in the port city of Assab. The company was later substituted by the government, and the government sent several exploration missions to open a new trade corridor from Assab to Abyssinia. The repetitive exploring missions failed, and in one incident all members of a mission was killed in the Denakil desert by the local people. This incident forced the Italians to abandon the attempt to establish a new corridor, and finally occupied Massaua in 1885. Robert Woolbert (1932) described the death of Bianchi's exploring mission as "Bianchi engaged in an attempt to open up a practicable route from the Abyssinia highland to Assab, when his party was murdered in the desert of Dancalia in 1884 … and it is commonly held to be the one of the factors determining the government's occupation of Massaua (Woolbert 1932: 439)". After the total failure of the Assab-Abyssinia trade route exploration, the Italians moved north to the Gulf of Zula, and occupied Massawa in 1885.

The coincidence of the emergence of a new capital in the highlands, Asmara, in 1884/5 and the occupation and expansion of the Italians in 1885 had a long term impact in the geo-political situation of the Saho people and the trade route that passes through their territory. The initial attempt of the Italian was to conquer further territory by following the traditional trade route from the coast to Abyssinia. The occupation of Arkeeko and Weah by the Italian soon followed by the formation of their garrison in Weah indicate that the Italian expansion strategy was more or less along the preexisting trade route via Ruba Hadas and Nabagade Valley. The expansion of the Italians alarmed and posed territorial and military threat against the Tigrean emperor. The emperor gathered his army at Sanafe town which is located at the top edge of the escarpment and the trade

corridor. “Alula interpreted the move as a threat to Agame, and he subsequently lead a counter-force to Senafe where a new fort was being erected” (Erlich 1982: 98). Later, Ras Alula who was keenly following the Italian military movements in the lowland decided to ambush the Italian garrison in Se’atit and Weah, and he defeated the Italian army in these battles.

The cumulative effects of victory of Allula, establishment of new commercial and administrative center in Asmara and the establishment of Asmara-Massawa trade route gradually weakened the trade corridor that cuts across the Saho territory. Since then the Saho people became marginal to the regional and international trade activities, and gradually the trade route disappeared.

*2.2.4. Social organization*

The Italian ethnographer Alberto Pollera tried to group the Saho speaking society into three genealogical origins; indigenous, Denakil, and Arab groups. In his description, the tribes of Ida, Idifere, Baradota, Hasabat Are, Minifere, Tor’a, Hazo and Assaurta belong to the indigenous group of the Saho society. The second group consists the Denakil group, which presumably do share descent line with the Afar society, comprises the Razamara and Belusa. The final group according to Pollera is associated with Arab origin, and the tribes in this category include Intile Sheikh Are, Bet Kalifa, Bet Tewekel and Abdela Sanna. There was another attempt during colonial period to group the scattered Saho speaking societies into various descent units. Nadel (1944) in his monograph, *Races and Tribes of Eritrea*, tried to classify the sub tribes of Assaurta into two classes; ‘proper’ and ‘affiliated’. Even though he did not elaborate the distinction

between these two groups, the dichotomy sounds the aboriginal and foreign roots (elements) of the Assaurta.

The social organization of the Saho is characterized by segmentary lineage. Rapid lineage segmentation and frequent disappearance of lineage groups, added with the lack of written sources, creates difficulty to historically examine the segmentary organization, and the exact hierarchy of the segmentary system. Similarly, the identification of autonomous lineages groups is not only difficult for researchers, but for the native people as well. Abdelkader Mohammad, a native Saho sociologist, for example dismissed the colonial and postcolonial assertion that the Saho society is organized in five tribes in Eritrea and another one in Ethiopia (Mohammad 1996, 2013). Then, he said there are ten autonomous tribes of the Saho. In contrast to this account, the website of allsaho enlists 19 autonomous tribes, and the list seems open for the website requests users for more information regarding missing or misspelled tribe and sub tribes. The reason for the unclear number of tribes may be associated with the colonial effort to unit some, especially small, tribes into common group, and the continuous segmentation of new lineages and disappearing the preexisting ones.

Arguably, three-hierarchy of maximal lineages exist in the segmentary frame of the society; *kisho* (*qabila/mela*), *harak (gaysha/are*) and *dik*. The *kisho*, *are* and *dik* are the three hierarchies of the maximal lineage in the segmentary organization. The word *kisho* is equivalent to 'tribe' and accordingly *'are*' and *dik* to sub tribe and clan respectively. The Saho *kisho*s vary profoundly in the number of sub tribes and clans, and sometimes the three-level segmentary may not apply to all of them. For instance, the Hasabat Are

is ‘a small tribe divided into five sub clans’ (Mohammad 1996). In this case, although the Hasabat Are is an autonomous *kisho*, the sub tribal category doesn’t exist, and hence the three-level hierarchy does not work in this case. Majority of the *kisho* however have the three level maximal lineage levels.

The multiplicity of lineage terms and their plural meanings create ambiguity in identifying the exact meaning or the clear boundary of the hierarchies of the segmentary system. For instance, the word ‘*are*’ is used at sub-tribe level and individual family level. Similarly, the word ‘*dik*’ has multiple connotations; in some context it means a clan, village a family or a locality. Moreno Vergari and Roberta Vergari (2003) also added extra meaning of the word such as place of birth, country and nation. Earlier, Nadel (1944) pointed out that the word *dik* can mean group of families who live in the same locality regardless of their origin. He noted “the kinship groups are not local groups as well, though the terms *dik* is also used to denote a local group (of mixed lineage)” (Nadel 1944: 62). In sum the word are and *dik* can be used interchangeably in some context, while in other context differs markedly, especially with reference to the hierarchy of the segmentary model.

Minimal lineages under the *dik* also exist in the segmentary structure of the Saho. A minimal lineage, following Fortes definition, is the descent group belonging to the same ancestor, or else could be termed ‘primary segment’. As I pointed earlier, due to the multiplicity of the lineage terms and their flexible meaning, it is difficult to demarcate the exact boundary between maximal and minimal lineage. I would rather formulate, at least for the purpose of my present discussion, that lineage groups with common apical

ancestor as minimal lineages, and their internals segmentation as supra-minimal lineages. The supra-minimal lineages in the Saho vary from one lineage group (clan/tribe) to another, and there is no clearly designated term referring to the supra-*dik* lineage subunits. Sometimes they are referred by the term *are* and in other circumstance by the term *dik*. It was common in Safira, where I did my fieldwork, that the inhabitants used the word *enda* to refer minimal lineages. In other cases, the minimal lineages may be referred just by the name of the founder.

Tribal territory, which is an important factor in segmentary system, can illustrate the segmentary structure of the Saho society. Land is owned collectively, at *kisho* level, and all the members of the *kisho* are entitled usufruct right throughout the tribal territory. The customary law is flexible on land issues, and allows the *kisho* members to freely use the land. But renting or passing to non- *kisho* individual is strictly prohibited. It appears to me that the tribal land is practically further sub divided into internal units based on lineage composition. The Minifere *kisho* territory stretches from Qohaito Plateau and vicinity to the Gulf of Zula, and the clans (Feqat Harak, Ga'aso and Dasamo) designate their sub-territory within the general *kisho* territory. And the territorial sub division continues up to the minimal lineage, in the case of Feqat Harak for instance. We should be cautious that the territorial segmentation might differ from one zone of the tribal territory to another. Since most *kisho*s possess a tribal territory ranging from the highland to the coast, the physiographic and topographic difference across the tribal territory affect the territorial organization. To continue the case example of the Minifere, which I am most familiar, the minimal lineages under this *kisho* have separate territory (settlement at least) in the highland. In the mid-altitude

(Nabagade Valley) however the villages of these lineage groups are found interspaced. Hence, we should be careful to access the lineage-territory pattern (relationship) throughout the tribal territory.

### *2.2.5. Rituals and Rites of Passage*

The Saho practice different types of rituals that can generally be grouped into *public* and *private* categories. The *public* rituals mean ceremonies and rituals performed by a lineage group (maximal or minimal lineage groups) for collective purpose. The rituals and ceremonies under this category include ancestor veneration ceremonies, cultivation ritual and cult of the dead. These rituals have collective significance and are organized by the lineage group's committee. The committee oversees the fund raising activities (either in cash or in kind) from families' contribution and other sources, donation or selling of collective properties (timber or firewood). The committee then decides the amount of foods and drinks to be offered during each ceremony.

Saho tribes and lineage groups differ significantly in the number and regularity of public rituals. Most of the time, the public rituals are associated with the lineage groups' autonomous history and socio-political situation. It is widely acknowledged by all tribes that I contacted that the Feqat Harak clan (where I do my fieldworks) have the most regular veneration ceremonies compared to other lineage group. The regularity of the Feqat Harak veneration ceremonies is manifested in the clear timing of the ceremonies calendar (March 19, April 5, May 15 and June 12), fixed ritual sites for each ceremony (Wekeiro, Andal and Mabaroyta), and clear ritual proceedings during the ceremonies.

Other ritual uniqueness of the Feqat Harak clan is the banning of drum in all public and private contexts.

Two ancestor venerations dedicated to the apical ancestor, one ritual dedicated to a famous historical figure who introduced the cultivation economy, and one ritual to commemorate recent event of territorial clash with a neighboring lineage group are annually celebrated by the Feqat Harak. Ancestor veneration rituals in the name of *Feq* Ibrahim, the apical ancestor, are held on March 19 and April 5 in Wekeiro village (Qohaito Plateau) and Andal (Nabagade Valley) respectively. The ancestor veneration ritual in Wekeiro is the biggest of all ceremonies, and in 2015 the ritual was attended by around one thousand participants from all over the country. Three cattle, six goats, three quintal[11] of rice, and a quintal of sugar were served during the ceremony. Due to inaccessibility of the ritual site (Andal), the ancestor veneration ritual on March 19 is only attended by few participants. In the same year, a cattle and half a quintal of rice were served along with tea and coffee.

The cultivation ritual, *Ziyari Tena*, was organized by a famous historical figure in the lineage's history named Qadi Abdela. Qadi Abdela is the second famous historical figure after the apical ancestor. He was the lineage group's representative in the Italian colonial administration, and his close friendship with other Italian appointed chiefs earned him good reputation and significant influence in the lineage and administration. He was invited to Rome in 1911 (inferred from inscription in his medal) to attend a

[11] A quintal is equivalent to 100kg.

ceremony organized by Victor Emmanuel III[12]. After his return, he organized the first official cultivation ritual in Qohaito Plateau by inviting his friends from the nearby agrarian village Tekonda'e. This ritual, according to the oral tradition of the lineage group, is the first time agricultural implement (equipments) was acquired in the lineage's history. The ritual took place under a big juniper tree in the village of Mereba'e on June 12th. Ever since, the place was renamed to *Ziyari Tena* (place of the ritual) and became the ritual site for the ceremony. Every year on June 12th, the lineage group celebrates *Ziyari Tena*, and sowing the summer cultivation is strictly prohibited before *Ziyari Tena*.

The last annual ritual is the one called 'Mabaroyta', after the name of the ritual place. This ritual originated recently, 2010, when the Northern Red Sea Zone, which administers the clan territory of the Feqat Harak in the lowland, tried to implement a small scale plantation in the deltaic region in the Gulf of Zula. The administration ruled an open registration to anyone interested to pursue small scale plantation in the designated area, which partially was the clan territory of the Feqat Harak. On this occasion, some of the neighboring tribes followed the order of the administration, and after fulfilling the formalities they began to work (clear shrubs … etc) the fields. News of the territorial intrusion and recent development spread to the elders of the Feqat Harak in Qohaito.

A vigilante group was assembled quickly (about fifty youngsters) armed with clubs, and set out to meet the intruders on the spot. Simultaneously, a group of elders went to

[12] Victor Emmanuel III (1869-1947) was the king of Italy from 1900 to 1946.

Massawa (seat of the administration) to file an official complaint to the administration. On the same day, their request was accepted and the administration dropped the project to curb further escalation. The vigilante group arrived in the contested area on the second night of departure. On their arrival the intruders flew leaving their belongings, and never returned after they were chased away by the vigilante. Few days later, the elders went to the vigilante and together they celebrated the incident by slaughtering a cattle and other ceremonial food offering in the coastal village of Mabaroyta on March 19, and it became a regular annual ceremony ever since.

The Feqat Harak practice cult of the dead, according to Fortes definition, any ancestor veneration to an unidentified ancestor or ancestors collectively. The ritual called '*Ed Motan'*; literally meaning ceremony/feast of the dead takes place in the month of Ramadan. Because, *Ed Motan* is hosted by a volunteer family, and is not quite sure how many families will volunteer in one year, and thus the ritual is less predictable. However, since the ritual is highly localized, where only the members of the same residential unit participate, it can be organized in one or two days. The host family slaughters a goat and prepares palm dates, non-alcoholic drinks (usually instant fruit powders), and sometimes meat and pumpkin stews. Later, the host family invites the neighboring families.

Although the annual rituals and *Ed Motan* have variable historic and social context, the principal ritual activity performed during the ceremony is the prayer session. The Feqat Harak has high reputation and popularity in ritual prayer is well acknowledged among Saho individuals. All tribes and lineage groups mandatorily invite a representative from

the Feqat Harak clan whenever they perform any kind of ceremony, and this norm continues to this day. Especially, during the ancestor veneration rituals, members of other lineage groups who got misfortune or any problem bring a gift to the ceremony and request the elders for prayer and blessing[13].

*Private rituals*, the second category of ritual, are related with individual rites of passage performed to transform an individual from one social status (identity) to another. Meaning, the *private rituals* refer to the ceremonies related with the social mobility of the members of a lineage group from one social status to another. The private rituals are all same across the Saho tribes and clans. Similar to other pastoralists in East Africa, age organization and gender play significant role in the social organization of Saho, and the rites of passage is structure along these organizing principles. Series of rituals and rites of passage mark entry of an individual to a particular age grade and the onset of new social identity. *Melhin* (birth rite), *tahara* (circumcision*), gombo ido, dipokat, lisho* and *digib* are the rites of passage that transform an individual in the hierarchies of the age grade.

In Saho, there are three age grades separated by ritual and rites of passage. *Ai'it* (infancy) comprises uncircumcised boys and girls infants. There are several ritual performed during this age-grade both for the infant and the birth giving mother, *ulla*.

[13] In 2015's veneration ceremony the committee organizing the ancestor veneration in April went to Adi Keih's livestock market to buy cattles for the ceremony. The committee accidentally met in the market a person who belongs to the Assaurta tribe. When he heard that the Feqat Harak committee was there, he offered them a cattle worth of 30,000 Eritrean Nakfa (about 2000 USD) and sugar and coffee (a kilogram each). He told them that he married twice but with no child, so he requested them to give him a blessing and prayer in the ceremony. The Feqat Harak ancestor veneration is full of such stories, and many visitors come with different kinds of gifts seeking blessing.

These rituals take place simultaneously during the *ulla*'s confinement period and ritual, which takes forty days of exclusion. The joint ritual creates minor problem in differentiating the *ai'it* and *ulla*'s ritual. Generally, series of rituals are performed during this period particularly at 7th, 12th and 40th days of the confinement period.

The 7th day ritual called *melhin* is an important birth rite and possesses critical importance for the *ulla* an *ai'it*. One of *melhin*'s objectives is to offer a feast in honor of *ulla* by slaughtering an animal, and is proclaimed that this food offer will fasten her physical recovery from the delivery/labor and postpartum bleeding. For this ceremony two or three goats depending on the economic status of the hosting family are ritually slaughtered and served in various forms of traditional cuisine. *Melhin* is also important for the *ai'it* because it is during this ceremony that a name is chosen and decided. That is why the ceremony is alternatively called *simaya*, which means 'naming' in Arabic. *Melhin* and other birth rites are principally celebrated at the level of *are/dik*. In principle, these series of birth rites are attended by member of the nuclear family and some visitors from the village; although it rarely occurs that some participants come from outside the village.

*Gombo* is the second age-grade and covers the period between circumcision, *Tahara*, and a rite of passage called *gombo ido*. Put differently, entry to the *gombo* age-grade is marked by the performance of the *tahara* and ends when the person performs *gombo ido*. *Tahara* is carried out distinctively for boys and girls. *Tahara* which transforms the *ai'it* into *gombo/frada gombo* (boyhood/girlhood), is performed at the age of the *ai'it* ranging from up to six months for a boy and two years for a girl. Male *tahara* is

accompanied with large feast organized by the family of the child undergoing the rite, and the ceremony is observed at the level of *dik* with rare participation from clan from different village. Female *tahara* however is performed by the mother and her associates. It is only her mother and her close associates who know whether a girl has gone through the rite or not. Compared with the birth rite, *tahara* has wider participation from other clan members and this is as will be highlighted shortly is generally associated with the slight ascendancy in the social status of the person in the hierarchy of the segmentary lineage, and upgrade in the age-grade stratum.

A more pronounced uplift in the age-grade and segmentary hierarchy is observed in the rite of *gombo ido*, which is a male rite of passage performed at the age of 15-18 (end of childhood/*gombo*hood). *Gombo ido*, which literally means 'throwing *gombo* away is primarily a hairstyle ritual where the person changes from *gombo* into *gofere*. This ceremony is celebrated with big feast, a *mini-wedding* as some elders describe it, that should be attended at clan level. All members of the sub clan should send representative in the ceremony, and similarly paternal and maternal kins of the person should be present, in which its failure leads to the illegitimacy of the ceremony. After the performance of this rite of passage, the socio-economic and cultural status of the *gombo* dramatically changes and is accompanied with the collateral change in the identity of the segmentary lineage and other social statuses. In my MA dissertation, I have argued that this rite of passage leads the initiatee to a 'liminal phase', because *gombo ido* terminates the *gombohood* phase of the person, but manhood (*lebhaito*) is yet to be achieved with the performance of wedding. The person attains a status called *burguda*, a liminal or suspension between 'neither boy and nor man' phase of the person.

The significance of *gombo ido* in the hierarchy of the segmentary system is demonstrated by the clan-level celebration of the ceremony, where the presence of representative of each sub tribe is a decisive requirement. Birth rites and *gombo ido* generate different identities in the social status of the person in relation to the hierarchies of the segmentary lineage. *Gombo iddo* entitles a person to key social rights; allows ownership of herd, participation in the political activities, marriage and so on. The correlation between the hierarchies of the age-grade and *gombo ido* is manifested with the right for collective (tribe level) *teskar*. *Teskar* is a postmortem rite performed for a deceased person. Although *Teskar*'s principal objective is fulfillment of religious requirement, the way *teskar* is conducted reflects segmentary principle and social identity. For a *gombo ido* uninitiated boy his *teskar* is performed at *are/dik* level exclusively by his immediate family/village, while *gombo ido* initiated boy's *teskar* is held at *kisho* level. I propose this difference is in some ways correlated with the creation of different social agency possessed by members of different age-sets in reference to the larger frame of the segmentary units.

Finally, the last age-grade '*lebhaito/numa*', which is manhood and womanhood respectively, is entered after the wedding rite, *digib*. The transformation of the liminal boy/girl into *lebhaito/numa* is mediated by the *digib* ceremony which is accomplished by the presence of members from all Saho tribes. In principle, all Saho tribes should send their representative to the *digib,* although the practical issues like seasonality and locational factors may actually hinder its full realization and proper execution.

## 2.3 Previous anthropological research

In general sense, anthropological study of the Saho people dates back to the early days of the discipline. This section will attempt to summarize the anthropological, archaeological and historical research that has so far conducted on Saho and their territory. The summary presented in this paper is far from complete per se for several reasons. Anthropological inquiries on Saho livelihood were very scanty, and those few researches revolved around narrow themes, which failed to present detailed description of the people. This hinders this chapter's tendency to develop well organized summary.

The second problem, which aggravates the lack of highly focused anthropological research on Saho, is related with the issue of language and translation. Preliminary description and record of Saho way of life started during the Italian colonial period, and were written in Italian language, and these literatures largely remain untranslated to English. Very few texts, such as the *Native People of Eritrea* (Alberto Pollera 1935/1996), were translated into English, which is currently used as main reference in the higher institutes of learning in the country. Thus, the two main problems, scarcity and language, are the chief reasons for the incompleteness of the summary of previous studies in this chapter.

Abdelkader Mohammad (2013) tried to summarize the anthropological and linguistic works carried out among the Saho in chronological order. He classified chronologically the literature into *precolonial*, *colonial* and *postcolonial* classes. His precolonial summary starts from the 19$^{th}$ century works of Henry Salt onwards. I will follow different way of summarizing the existing literature based on the thematic organization

and will try to cover a broader time frame starting from antiquity. I believe it is good to introduce these works to the readers for better information. Accordingly, the summary will be organized into *ethnographic, linguistic* and *other themes*.

*2.3.1. Ethnographic studies*

Ethnographic works, including ancient documents, 'paleo-ethnography' (David Kempe 1988) referring to the Saho starts from the ancient times. The works of Agatharchides and the Periplus of Erythraean Sea contain description about the inhabitants of the Red Sea coast of Africa. The ancient name of Adulis, originally from Azoli/Adoli, indicates association with the Eastern Cushitic roots, in which Afar and Saho are the likely candidates for the correlation. The troglodyte inhabitants of the Gulf of Zula and their pronounced pastoral subsistence base refer very closely with the contemporary Saho society and their recorded history. One of the biggest references missing in the classic period reference of the Saho society is the absence of any inscription in the region, which hampers a concrete reconstruction of the history of the people.

The late medieval period however saw the emergence of published works that contain closer reference to the Saho. 15$^{th}$ century works by Portuguese and Italian authors used the generic term of 'moor', which means the Muslim neighbors of the Christian Abyssinia. Throughout the 16$^{th}$ and 17$^{th}$ centuries, famous European travelers and diplomats wrote under the general term of 'moor', but with more direct reference to the Saho tribes. Francis Alvarez, and Almeida's account particularly present descriptions of the Abyssinian moors who separate the Abyssinia from the Red Sea coast.

The biggest weakness of the Portuguese and other European accounts of the 15th to 17th centuries is the failure to mention the ethnic groups in the lowlands. They put all the Muslim communities under the collective term 'moor', although linguistically, ethnically and tribally those Muslim communities represented diverse population. The other scholarly shortcoming of these works was the central reference point was the Abyssinia and every other peoples were marginal in their perspective. Hence, all the Muslim communities bordering with Abyssinia were only perceived how they live in opposition with the Abyssinian highlands – believed to be the land of the Prester John[14]. Generally, brief ethnographic information regarding the Saho tribes can be extracted particularly related with dwelling, subsistence and economy, religion, nature of inter-ethnic interaction, and other customs and habits of the people.

By the end of 18th century however travelers account with direct references to some Saho tribes began to emerge. Bukardt's Travels in Nubia; James Bruce's *Travels: between the Years1765 and 1773, through part of Africa, Syria, Egypt and Arabia into Abyssinia to discover the source of the Nile* (1806); Henry Salt's *A Voyage to Abyssinia and Travels into the Interior of that Country* (1814) present some coverage about the livelihoods of the Saho speaking societies. A relatively comprehensive description of the Saho tribal division, economy, political organization, village configuration, history, habits and personality were presented in their work. One of the major problems emerging between the travelers and the Saho guides was related to the safety and price of the escorting business. This relationship was tensional as the Saho guides demanded

[14] Prester John is a legendary Patriarch and King popular in Europe which was believed to live in the midst of hostile pagan societies. According to medieval European mythologies various locations around the world were supposed to be the homeland of the Prester John, and the Portuguese believed Abyssinian Highland was the exact location.

more money while the travelers wanted to minimize the price as low as they can. As a result majority of the authors wrote about the uneasy personality, as tension broke out between them.

The proper ethnographic works referring the Saho ethnolinguistic group emerged during the Italian colonial period by Alberto Pollera, *The Native Peoples of Eritrea* (1935), and Francis Nadel's (1946) *Races and Tribes in Eritrea*, and I.M. Lewis *Peoples of the Horn of Africa* (1955). Other contributors whose work significantly covered the Saho people are Conti Rossini's books; Spencer Tringham's *Islam in Ethiopia* (1976), and Trevaski's *Eritrea: A Colony in Transition* (1946). Pollera and Nadel particularly carried out detailed ethnographic and historical description of the Saho in great detail and until recently both works were by far the biggest reference of the people.

Topic specific short documentation and research were carried out during the Eritrean war of independence by the cultural bureau of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF). Similar research continued in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology which later evolved into two separate departments; Department of Anthropology and Archaeology, and the Department of Sociology and Social Works in the University of Asmara and later Adi Keih College of Arts and Social Sciences. As a result, many research paper and report were produced regarding customs and traditions of the Saho people. Some of the themes widely studied include; kinship and marriage, aesthetics, material culture, age system and social organization.

I did my masters dissertation on the ceremonial offering and exchange of body adornments (ornaments and hair styles) among the Saho people. The ceremonial offering, receiving and exchange of body adornments performed in ritual and initiation rites mediate social relations among the members of the society and also symbolize the creation of social identities (status) for the person undergoing particular rites of passage. The dissertation examined the symbolic links among the segmentary lineage system of the Saho societies, rites of passage and ceremonial body adornments.

*2.3.2. Linguistic studies*

In strictly anthropological sense, overwhelming majority of the anthropological studies on Saho were linguistic studies. The Saho language is the most widely studied aspect of their culture, and an overwhelming proportion of Saho research belong to the language/linguistic genre. It is very recently that the first non-dictionary book on Saho was published. Otherwise, since the end of the 19$^{th}$ century the only full range books on Saho were just dictionary. Leo Reinschi publication of the first Saho – German dictionary, and his contemporaries published articles on the Saho language. The Saho language was extensively studied due to its relationship with the sister languages. The lack of written document in all these languages and the total absence of indigenous writing system caused the widespread linguistic studies for historical purpose. The expansion of the Somali societies in the 16$^{th}$ and 17$^{th}$ centuries in the Horn of Africa, and Afar expansion and migration are among the widely studied historical and linguistic topics.

Besides dictionary, some features of the Saho language had attracted several linguists especially in the field of dialectology. Some important works in this aspect include; '*A Sketch of Saho Grammar*' Banti and Vergari 2005, *Dialectic of the Saho* Conti Rossini 1913, *Some word order Principles of the Saho*, Marcello Lamberti 1951; *Note on the Structure of the Saho*, Welmers E 1951; *Dialectologie D Afar Saho*, Didier Morin 1994; *Afar-Saho and the position of Cushitic within HamitoSemetic/AfroAsiatic*" Andrzej Zaborski, 2009.

Recently, an originally material culture study project, turned into linguistic study was set up. The project was launched jointly by the University of Naples, CA Forscari University of Venice, and a non-profit organization called Ethnorema in 2009. The project also run a website called, www.sahoarchive.org, which contains different documents related to the Saho culture, news and events. Surprisingly despite the material culture heading of the project, majority of the published research papers fall under the category of language, and any paper on material culture is yet to come. Most of the contributors are linguists such as Moreno and Roberta Vergari, and Giorgio Banti, and the works on grammar, lexicon and *re*publication of the Saho-Italian-English dictionary originally published in 2003. Currently, a plan is underway to publish a book on dwelling (my personal contact).

*2.3.3. Other themes*

Anthropological study of the Saho began to show significant diversification of themes and topics since the last decade. New research themes began to evolve; such as material culture (although yet to publish significant works), customary law (Mohammad 2009),

ethnic identity and national consciousness (Mohammad 2013), Ecology and settlement pattern (Robel in press), Architectural diversity and dwelling types (Robel in press, and Ethnorema in press). Once fully realized, the study of material culture will be a significant contribution to understand the changing context of the material culture assemblage among the Saho society. Due to their isolated topographic and ecology, the Saho society's material culture especially the domestic/household and architectural parts, have been fairly preserved. But after the 1970s, when the people became subject to intense cultural contact with overseas (especially Arabia Peninsula), the material culture became under significant change and transformation. The encroachment of urbanization in the highland (Qohaito Plateau) particularly has significant impact. Hence, the documentation and systematic study of the material culture as stipulated in the ASMC is a timely research.

The publication of the two books by Abdelkader Mohammad, on customary law, and nationalism and ethnic identity of the Saho, has surely boosted the literature on Saho society. As I said earlier, these two books are the first non-dictionary books on the Saho and the author is successful in accumulating an in-depth historical and ethnic/tribal data that are necessary for future researchers. The author had, although not surprising as he belongs to the ethnic group and has doctoral degree from a respected institution, had for long time constantly contributing research papers on diverse topic; genealogical and social organization, conflict resolution, nationalism and ethnicity.

## 2.4. Previous Anthropological Researches in the Study Area

The research area this dissertation deals is the Qohaito Plateau and Nabagade Valley located at the eastern slope of the Qohaito Plateau. This is the first attempt to study two culturally interconnected ecological and topographic zones in an integrated way. No such research had been done before, and no research was carried out in the Nabagade Valley as well. Only the Qohaito Plateau had enjoyed short and long terms anthropological research projects in the past, and this section will review the major archaeological works carried out in the plateau since the late 19$^{th}$ century. Due to the dense concentration and diverse types of archaeological remains in Qohaito, overwhelming majority of the previous studies was archaeological type (material culture studies). Only recently ethnographic and linguistic studies began to emerge in Qohaito Plateau.

Steffen Wenig and Matt Curtis (2008) summarized concisely the archaeological projects conducted in Qohaito Plateau, and they rightly pointed out that the Theodore Bent's publication of *The Sacred City of the Ethiopians* (1896) put Qohaito in the archaeological literature for the first time. Following Bent's visit, other German travelers and archaeologists such as Max Shoeller and Sehweinfurth visited the plateau, and identified some of the monumental structures as temple building (Wenig and Curtis 2008). In the beginning of the 20$^{th}$ century, several field projects were carried out by German and Italian archaeologists. The Deutsche Aksum-Expedition (DAE) directed by Litmann, documented the major archaeological features of Qohaito Plateau. The Italian geographical, geological and ethnological expedition led by Giotto Danielli and Olinto

Marinelli also published reports of their fieldworks. “Particularly significant were the careful drawing and photographs made by these expeditions (DAE and Italian Expedition)” (Wenig and Curtis 2008: 291).

After decades of paucity, archaeological research revived in the 1950s mostly in the subject of rock art studies. Prominent rock art scholars such as Abraham Drewes, Vincenzo Franchini and Paolo Graziosi visited the Qohaito Plateau and its adjacent slopes. They documented the rock art sites in the plateau and the nearby region, and their research was oriented on regional comparison of rock art styles and motifs in the Horn of Africa, North Africa and Arabian Peninsula. The end of the 1960s witnessed the birth and escalation of the Eritrean war of independence, and Qohaito Plateau was the frontier between the Ethiopian forces and the liberation movement especially the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF). The Qohaito Plateau and the Aret district, north of Qohaito, were the regional command posts and supply lines between the Red Sea and other regions under the liberation movement’s control. In the 1970s, the Qohaito Plateau became a battle ground, and after the withdrawal of the movement, the Ethiopian army controlled the plateau. Some local informants describe the damage to the archaeological properties during the occupation of the plateau by the Ethiopian army. Later in 1980s the Ethiopian government suspended all archaeological activities, and the shutdown continued until the Eritrean independence in 1991.

Soon after the independence of Eritrea, Qohaito was the first archaeological site in Eritrea to get attention by the then newly established National Museum of Eritrea (NME). In 1992, the NME banned any construction activities near the archaeological

properties (especially near the village of Afuma, Mereba'e and Bozo). Shortly, the German Archaeological Mission to Eritrea (G.A.M.E) was launched in 1996-1997 under the leadership of Steffen Wenig. The project surveyed about 900 sites in a 56 hectar area, and many types of archaeological features were documented; "town ruins, podium building, cisterns, mount features, individual building structures wall features, paved roads, rock engravings and inscriptions, basin, stalae, open air prayer areas, and lithic and ceramic scatter areas" (Wenig and Curtis 2008: 293).

The Cultural Asset Rehabilitation Project (CARP) from 2003 to 2008 was initiated by the Government of Eritrea developed in collaboration with foreign consultants a heritage management plan for Qohaito. The draft plan was finalized and submitted to the office, but so far did not implemented, however the document was instrumental in the effort to nominate Qohaito in UNESCO's world heritage list. As the result of the continued efforts in this direction, Qohaito was tentatively enlisted in the document in 2011. Similarly, Rezene Russom Tesfatsion did his doctoral research on heritage issue in Qohaito and Metera (nearby site). He submitted his dissertation in March 2016 to the Department of Archaeology and Heritage Studies at the University of Dar Salam in Tanzania.

# Chapter Three

## *Historical Outline and Socio-Political Context of Lineage Segmentation of the Feqat Harak Clan*

The Feqat Harak clan underwent series of lineage segmentation in its sixteen generation deep genealogical history. These lineage segmentations resulted in the frequent formation of the supra-clan (*dik*) units. First, the current two genealogical branches were formed called *Enda* Abdela and *Enda* Sofi. Consequently, each branch underwent further segmentations, which resulted in the formation of a total fifteen primary segments. The primary segments are referred as '*enda*' (Tigrinya term for descent group) or '*bet*' (Arabic term for house). The fifteen *enda*s are Eshma'el Boka, Qadi Suleman, Tsadwa, Dawd Gura, Ibrahim Misgun, Sheikh Ali, Yahya, *Feq* Omar, *Feq* Mohammad, Naba Ishma'el, Ab Dawd, *Feq* Ali Wahe (*Enda* Abdela branch), Sheikh Ali, Sheikh Adem, and Ahmed Gura (*Enda* Sofi branch).

Majority of these fifteen *enda*s dwell in the clan territory that extends from the village of Digdigta in Qohaito Plateau to the coastal village of Mabaroyta. Four *enda*s however dwell outside the principal clan territory; Yayha live in Igila, Legason and Arigot; *Feq* Mohammad in Graret, Che'alo and Adi Keih; *Feq* Ali Wahe in Hazemo; and *Feq* Omer in Legason and Adi Keih. The eleven *enda*s that live in the clan territory are divided into eleven settlement centers; Gurubtiya, Safira, Daero, Mashur (in Qohaito Plateau), Eshika, Sarwa, Gerwan, Dalo, Madhulo, Arbaba'e and Ma'eyan (in Nabagade Valley). *Settlement center* in this context refers to the formation of main village surrounded by many smaller villages, hamlets or cattle camps that circumvent the main village. These

settlement centers are distributed in the Nabagade Valley and Qohaito Plateau parts of the clan territory. In the eastern lowland and coastal area of the clan territory, there are no village or settlement centers, but cattle camps of seasonal nature or agricultural fields along the delta (often swidden cultivation or short-term pastoral occupation). Permanent villages and settlement centers of the Feqat Harak are found in the Nabagade Valley and the Qohaito Plateau, which is why the scope of the dissertation is set in these ecological and topographic units of the clan territory.

Here and the following chapters, I will present the empirical data of the history of the lineage segmentation and preliminary analysis the segmentations and post-segmentation formation and expansion of sedentary villages. Both the lineage segmentation and settlement formation and expansion are partially interlocked, and the discussion will be organized in a way that shows the partial interconnection. Further the chapter will argue, based on post-segmentation expansion, the existence of non-lineage (non-kinship) parameters of sedentary village formation and expansion. This will bring several non-lineage attributes and analytical variables to enrich and complete the analysis of the process. In this chapter, I will present the genesis, historical and social context of the eponym, life of the apical ancestor and his social and religious legacy, formation of ancestral land, the three lineage segmentations, and finally the post-segmentation period and external factors affecting the historical process of segmentation and spatial expansion.

## 3.1. The Feqat Harak Clan

The eponym of the Feqat Harak was derived from a combination of two Saho terms; *Feqat* and *Harak*. The former denotes a religious title, originated in the medieval period, given to the supreme Islamic Scholar in the Horn of Africa and the Nile Valley. According to the oral history of the Feqat Harak, the title was inherited from the father-in-law of the apical ancestor, and after his death in exile, his wife passed the title to her son – *Feq* Mohammad. The second part of the eponym means a clan in Saho language. The multiplicity of lineage terms in the language and their plural connotation and denotation create ambiguity to exactly refer a particular meaning. The meaning of lineage terms varies depending on the context. *Harak, gaysha,* and *mela* are coterminous to mean a clan or sub-tribe (Mohammad 2013). But difficulty arises when the terms are correlated with the hierarchies of the segmentary lineage system of Saho. These terms are equivalent with sub tribe, the second order in the maximal lineage of the segmentary system. But in the genealogical outline of the people, these terms refer to clan, third order, of the hierarchy (Diagram 3.1). The problem arises from the difference on the number of hierarchies in the segmentary structure of the Saho tribes. Thus, the lineage terms and their actual reference to the descent and segmentary hierarchy do not always match.

The Feqat Harak clan belongs to the Sileta sub-tribe of the Minifere *kisho*, which is one of the nineteen autonomous tribes of the Saho (www.allsaho.com). As noted in the previous chapters the segmentary structure of the Saho is quite difficult to draw boundary line of the hierarchies, because of the lack of organizational clarity and dialect

difference among the tribes. Hence, this dissertation hypothesizes the existence of three-hierarchy maximal lineages in the Minifere tribe divided into *kisho* (tribe), *mela/gaysha* (sub-tribe) and *dik* (clan). In this formulation, the Feqat Harak clan forms a unit within the Sileta *gaysha* (sub-tribe) of the Minifere *kisho* (tribe) (Diagram 3.1). The *dik* has also internal lineage sub-divisions, and will be referred as supra-*dik* (minimal lineage), and will be the core discussion topic in this chapter.

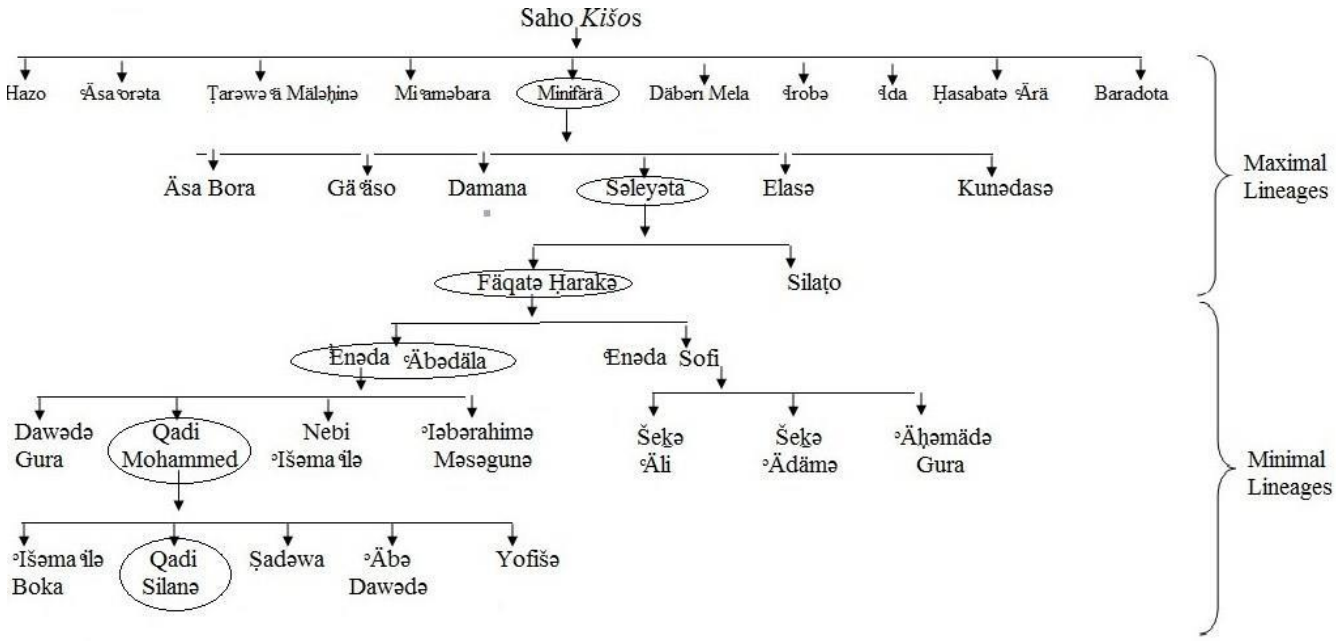



Diagram 3.1 Maximal and Minimal Lineages groups of the Saho, depicted from the genealogical tree of my host family

The Feqat Harak clan is classified as type one in Middleton and Tait's taxonomy; "a single all-inclusive lineage genealogy is sufficient to explain significant political identification lineages with territorial segmentation, and the political systems is build up on frameworks of agnatic lineage which are units in a single pyramidal system; "the pyramidal system covers the whole jural community" (Middleton and Tait 1958: 12).

The jural unity of the lineage group is the main attribute that categorize the Feqat Harak as type one. The customary law and Sharia based judiciary function located in Andal, the supreme authority with legitimate conflict resolution and decision making power. Since the second generation until recently Andal's primary function was maintained. Even during Italian colonial period the internal homogeneity of the Feqat Hark was maintained, although a chief was appointed to represent the lineage group in the colonial office. The position continued until 1991, the independence of Eritrea, and the last chief, Shum Dawd died in 1994.

The segmentary organization of the Feqat Harak displays a constant symbolic movement between the tribal unity (corporateness) at *kisho* level, and an internal cohesion (segmentary character fostering internal unity as oppose to external difference). Thus the segmentary system of the Feqat Harak reflects the coexistence of segmentary and corporateness of the lineage, and territorial organization of the local groups maintained in different guises (Middleton and Tait 1958: 5). Let us see two examples that indicate the coexistence of corporateness and segmentary aspects of the Feqat Harak segmentary system.

The settlement pattern proves that the Feqat Harak practice two discrete kinds of settlement pattern systems separately in the Nabagade Valley and the Qohaito Plateau; one organized at tribal level and the other one at clan level. The distribution of settlement centers and villages in the Nabagade Valley, where the members practice spate irrigation and pastoralism as predominant subsistence activities, is organized at tribal level. Villages are composed of clan, sub-tribe and tribal members. Similarly, the

formation of community and other corporate groups in the Nabagade Valley transcend the clan boundary, and regardless of their sub-tribal and clan affinities, the families belonging to the same tribe (Minifere) form villages freely. In the Qohaito Plateau however villages are organized at clan, not tribe, level and some village such as Ab'a are exclusively formed by primary lineage segment units only. Thus depending on the ecological and topographic zone, the Feqat Harak adheres to corporateness and segmentary in their segmentary structure and principle.

The second example that illustrate the coexistence of segmentary and corporateness of the lineage group is the hierarchical organization of the initiation rites and veneration ceremonies. The initiation rites performed by every member, nowadays declining due to modernity, assist the individual to climb the ladders of the segmentary system. The sequence of initiation rites, framed in the age grade, is birth rites, circumcision, *gombo ido/dipokat, lisho* (engagement), *digib* (marriage) and *Ida* (for widow only). Participants during the ceremony of each initiation rites ascend in the hierarchy of the segmentary frame, and the final stage (adult) of these initiation rites is celebrated at the *kisho* level, and since then the person attains full tribe membership, and is entitled to the rights and benefits of the tribal membership. The infant and childhood initiation rites however are attended by members of the clan only, and symbolize internal cohesion of primary and secondary segments.

It is not only the rites of passage that symbolize the hierarchies of the segmentary system, the ancestor veneration rituals and cult of dead also demarcate the segmentary and corporateness states of the Feqat Harak. Ancestor veneration manifests the epic

moment of corporateness (togetherness) of the Feqat Harak. The two annual ancestor veneration ceremonies, the cultivation ritual and the Mabaroyta ritual need to be attended by the whole clan. Other highly localized rituals like the *Ed Motan* (cult of the dead) on the other hand must be attended by the residential units not by the lineage group. Thus, the social and territorial organization of the Feqat Harak foster tribal unity, or else clan and sub-clan (supra-clan) units, and this is an essential element in the segmentary nature of the lineage group.

## 3.2 Genesis of the Feqat Harak

The genealogical origin of the Feqat Harak starts when the apical ancestor was converted to Islam. The apical ancestor, *Feq* Ibrahim, lived before sixteen generations, which is estimated to 400 years ago. Prior to his conversion to Islam and becoming the founder of the Feqat Harak clan, *Feq* Ibrahim lived as a Christian monk by the name *Qeshi* (Reverend) Abraha in the Nabagade Valley in a specific place called Mariam Sebulale. *Qeshi* Abraha descent belongs to Tigrinya ethnolinguistic group. His descent line is well recorded by his Tigrinya relatives, who are now scattered in different parts of the highland. The early life history of *Qeshi* Abraha is reconstructed from the written sources collected from his Tigrinya relatives. One or two decades ago, Mergeta Tsegai Tekleberhe (descendant of the Tigrinya relatives of *Qeshi* Abraha) sent an undated letter with genealogical detail of the apical ancestor to Sheikh Saleh, who is resident of the village of Eshika. This letter is the only written document the lineage group possesses as reference.

The letter sent from Mergeta Tsegai to Sheikh Saleh explains that there were two brothers, called Qeyahay and Tsalmay, living in Qohaito Plateau long before *Qeshi* Abraha. Dispute broke out between Qeyahay and Tsalmay and went to war against each other. The cause of the dispute, although not clear, is believed to be related to marriage issues (expressed by the people as '*about their daughters*'). In the conflict, the two houses were almost destroyed, but two sons of Qeyahay, named Shmer and Zmer, survived. After the dispute, the descendants of Shmer and Zmer migrated to different parts of the highland. Some are believed to have settled in the adjacent plains west of Qohaito Plateau, while others moved to a far locations; Senbet-Mehari went to Tera'emni, Tesfatsion to Monokuseito, Weldetsion to Embaderho, Merhatsion to Adi Wegri, and Tsalmay to Ham.

*Qeshi* Abraha was the descendant of Senbet-Mehari at 6$^{th}$ generation, and his father's name was Behaymanot. Behaymanot gave birth to Qeshi Abraha and to his three brothers – *Qeshi* Oqbagiorgis, *Qeshi* Oqbasenbet and *Qeshi* Oqbahans. Both Oqbahans and Oqbasenbet went to Metera, and Oqbasenbet later went to the vicinity of Digsa and his descendants continue to live there until present day. *Qeshi* Oqbahans remained in Embalaka, and *Qeshi* Abraha went to Sebulale, located in the Nabagade Valley.

The oral and textual source of the pre-Islamic past of *Qeshi* Abraha fits very well with the archaeological remains found in the vicinity of Sebulale. *Qeshi* Abraha's migration to and residence in Sebulale village can be demonstrated with the ancient/medieval church building and large burial site found in Sebulale Valley. The contemporary inhabitants of the area refer the site as 'Mariam Sebulale', according to the Coptic

Orthodox Church nomenclature of churches by the name of the covenant beholder. In my reconnaissance survey, I observed that 'Mariam Sebulale' is a two-building church complex. The big building has a rectangular plan with 5m by 6m dimension with 3m high wall. The small building, which lies at about 3m distance from the main building, has a square layout measuring 2m by 2m, but less than 1m in height. The thick sediment accumulation at the base of the building, I believe, has buried a significant portion of the lower part of the building. The architectural style of both buildings has 'Axumite' character, and share strong affinity with buildings discovered in Adulis, Qohaito and Metera. Towards north of the church, there is a dense distribution of rubbles, which looks like a burial ground, and this supports the idea that the site was a church.

The oral tradition narrates that *Qeshi* Abraha served in Mariam Sebulale and was also in charge of coordinating other churches around the region. Later he resigned from his position at the church, and secluded himself in a cave (near the contemporary village of Bozo), and spent about six months in isolation, feeding on wild fruits and vegetables. The cave where he spent in isolation is now called '*Be'ati* (cave) Abraha. After six months of seclusion, he decided to convert to Islam, and went to the coastal village of Zula. In Zula, *Qeshi* Abraha met *Feq* Mohammed Senior (hereafter *Feq* Mohammad Sn.), from Tigre ethnic group, who was a prominent Islamic scholar, and head of the legendary seven houses of Islamic teachers (*Melhin Mi'embara*). *Feq* Mohammad Sn. was believed to have a vision in his dream the night before *Qeshi* Abraha met him. *Qeshi* Abraha requested *Feq* Mohammad Sn. to convert him to Islam, and accordingly *Feq* Mohammad performed his conversion. After the conversion, *Qeshi* Abraha was renamed to *Feq* Ibrahim, and married the daughter of *Feq* Mohammad Sn. - Fatuma.

Shortly after his conversion and marriage to Fatuma, *Feq* Ibrahim set out a Haj, pilgrimage to Mecca. After the Haj, he decided to stay longer in Mecca wishing to study Islamic texts, and in due course died in exile in Saudi Arabia. Not so much is known about *Feq* Ibrahim's life overseas, and some people say that he had family and descendants there as well. But what is certain and important for the genesis of Feqat Harak lineage group that his wife Fatuma gave birth to a son. Fatuma, *Feq* Ibrahim's widow, named her son after her father Mohammad.

Mohammad (hereafter *Feq* Mohamed Junior, Jn.) the only child of the union of Tigrinya father and Tigre mother grew up in his maternal grandparents' residence. After coming of age, Mohammad left Zula, and started a journey to the highland seeking *Feq* Ibrahim's ancestral land. Before *Feq* Mohammad Jn.'s departure however an important spiritual and territorial inheritance event took place in his maternal grandparent's family. *Feq* Mohammad Sn. was the leader of seven (*Melhin Mi'ambara*) prominent Islamic Scholars; Haj Abkur, Intile Sheikh Are, Ironaba, Ma'andita, Akder Busa, Barodota, and Sheikh Dinbago. *Feq* Mohamed Sn. decided to disband the seven scholars to the scattered tribes of Saho, and eventually he assigned each follwer to a particular Saho/Afar tribe. Haj Abkur was assigned to Assaurta, Ironaba to Hazo, Intile Sheikh Are to Minifere, Ma'andita to Afar, Akder Busa to Assaurta and Tor'a, Barodota to Assaurta. One of these scholars, Sheikh Dinbago, was not assigned to any tribe, and since the assignment to the tribes was considered as 'inheritance', *Feq* Mohammad Sn. gave him the healing power.

After *Feq* Mohammad Sn. completed dividing the territory under his jurisdiction to his followers and giving the healing power to Sheikh Dinbago, his daughter Fatuma complained for not getting any heir from his spiritual and territorial possessions. She asked for a share, and *Feq* Mohammad Sn. said to her "take my *ejaba'*. *Ejaba* literally means speech but its connotation is the verbal power to bless and even to curse. Fatuma was not satisfied with the gift she received from her father, *ejaba*, and insisting demanded more. Finally, *Feq* Mohammad Sn. gave her his title '*Feqih*'. Ever since, the hereditary title of '*Feqih*' was transferred from Tigre inhabitants of Zula to descendants of Fatuma. In other words, since the time *Feq* Mohammad Sn. declared to inherit his title to Fatuma, the title '*Feqih*' ceased among the Tigre inhabitants of Zula, and transferred to the descendants of Fatuma. So far about twenty individuals had been named by the title in the Feqat Harak. Eventually, Mohammad the son of *Feq* Ibrahim inherited the title, and was renamed as '*Feq* Mohammad' (hereafter *Feq* Mohammad Junior, Jn.).

The derivation of the title *Feqih* is very interesting, and shows high level of credibility of the oral tradition because it fits very well with the description of one of the highly respected ethnographic works of the 19$^{th}$ century in Africa. *Travels in Nubia* (1819) by J. Burckhardt is one of the monumental ethnographic works in Africa. Adams (1973) noted "the account of his travels recently published is one of the most sensitive ethnographic documents produced by any European in the 19$^{th}$ century" (Adams 1973: 213). His excellent description of the Nubian city of Shendi explains in detail the religious significance of the title of *Feqih*. According to him, there were three pilgrimage routes from interior Africa and the Sahara desert to Mecca across the Horn

of Africa. The departure point for these three routes is the Nubian City of Shendi, and the Islamic scholars in charge of religious teaching and the pilgrimage had the title of *Feqih* (Burckhardt 1819).

This ethnographic description presented in Burckhardt book implies significant correlation with the oral account of the acquisition of the special title by the Feqat Harak clan. First, both accounts are in consonant that the title *Feqih* is assigned to a supreme Islamic scholar with high religious responsibility. Secondly, in both narratives the function of the *Feqih* is associated with the Haj (Islamic pilgrimage) to Mecca. In Burckhardt's account the significance of the *Feqih*s as the arrangement of pilgrim's route to Mecca is adequately explained. And in the case of *Feq* Ibrahim and *Feq* Mohammad Sn.'s story the oral tradition narrates how their function, as Islamic scholars, was associated with the missionary work among Saho and Afar tribes and pilgrimage organization. Finally, the geographical setting of these narratives also displays significant correlation. The coastal city of Massawa, Gulf of Zula, was where *Feq* Mohammad Sn. used to dwell and perform his coordination activities of his religious duties. In Burckhardt travel, as the first European to visit Mecca, was originally designed to cross the Red Sea from Massawa. Adams (1973) noted the following expression:

> "Here Burckhardt tarried for a month, casting around for some means to proceed onward to Massawa … Finding that there was no communication between Shendi and Massawa, Burckhardt at length gave up his plan to travel farther south and

> joined instead a party of pilgrims bound for Mecca by way of the more northerly Red Sea coast of Suakin" (Adams 1973: 219 -220).

Finally, the Feqat Harak, as the legacy of the apical ancestor, and the inheritance of *Feqih* have proven and respected prayer reputation. The oral history says that the apical ancestor curiously prayed in Mecca for the sake of his descendants because as late converts to Islam, they might be discriminated by their fellow tribesmen. So, he prayed diligently to God to give them strength, protection and unique gift. That is why the clan is offered with prayer reputation along with the title of *Feqih*. Every Saho tribe and lineage group, when hosting any ceremony, must invite some religious men from the Feqat Harak. Once up on a time there was a legendary person by the name Haj Osama Abubaker Omer Gonahta from the village of lower Saro belonging to Asa Lesan tribe. This person expressed the respectable prayer reputation of the Feqat Harak as "What God decided in the heaven, send it to the tongue (*ejaba*) of Feqat Harak".

## 3.3. Lineage Segmentation of the Feqat Harak

It is believed that *Feq* Mohammad Jn. encountered discrimination in his childhood in Zula both for been son of a new convert, and son of a maternal relative. After coming of age, *Feq* Mohammad Jn. decided to leave Zula and go to his father's homeland. He headed to Qohaito Plateau. But since *Feq* Ibrahim lived in Sebulale Valley (mid-altitude), he established his residence in a place called Andal, and ever since the site became the ancestral land of the clan. It occupies a legendary significance not only among the Feqat Harak clan but widely among other Saho tribes and lineage groups as

well. In addition to being original homeland, Andal is ritual, burial and prayer site. Many Saho tribes acknowledge the ritual and religious significance of Andal. There is a popular expression in Saho, *Andal awlya kela daga*; meaning the ancestral grave in Andal. This refers to the high reputation and popularity of prayer gift of the Feqat Harak performed for the sake of other lineage groups.

*Feq* Mohammad Jn. established his first settlement in Andal in the Upper Kom'ali (Nabagade) Valley located between the Gulf of Zula and Qohaito Plateau. The sedentism of *Feq* Mohammed's settlement is uncertain because until the late 19$^{th}$ century the principal economic activity of the Saho society in general was pastoralism occasionally supplemented by long distance trade between the coast and hinterland. Hence Andal might have been a seasonal camp site during early phase of its occupation. Other possibility regarding the sedentism of Andal is that it might also be a sedentary settlement with satellite villages and cattle camps. Because, in transhumance pastoralism few members of the family/village migrate to seasonal pastures, while the majority of members stay at permanent or semi-permanent locations. Either possibility can be true for the early Andal occupation of the clan.

Regardless of the degree of sedentism early Andal was, the oral history and settlement pattern remains of the site indicate that it was the only settlement center of the clan. Demographically also the primary segment was composed of few family or extended families cluster and hence did not, perhaps, require many settlement centers. In terms of security as well, a newly founded segments usually stay together for defense and other security issues. Finally, the resource available in and around Andal could be enough for

few families and hence competition for resources could have played negligible factor. As a result of these above factors the minimal lineage continued united in terms of lineage organization and settlement until the fifth generation from the apical ancestor (Diagram 3.1).

At the fourth generation, however, the great grandson of the apical ancestor gave birth to two sons named Abubaker and Husein. The time scale for the first segmentation approximately occurred about hundred years after the foundation of the lineage group. This time corresponds with the beginning of 18th century, a period of relative stability both in the eastern lowlands and the highland. The highlands, especially northern Tigray, had been totally ruined after the Gragn war that occurred in the second half of 16th century, and as a consequence the political and military strength of the highland societies was totally weakened. Secondly, the new capital of the newly reconstituted Abyssinian kingdom was located further south in Gondar, which significantly reduced the actual control of the peripheral provinces in the north. As a result, the beginning of 18th century was very calm and peaceful in the highlands of Eritrea and Nabagade-Qohaito area. There was no large scale or regional wars, except rare revolt of the highland peoples and eastern slopes against the Turkish rule in Massawa [between 1557 and 1846] and other localities. This calm and stable political and military situation continued well up to the next century, when the beginning of the collapse of the Gondarian Era [16th and 17th centuries] paved the way for the rise of competitive regional lords in the highlands – the period referred to as 'Era of Princes'. This era is characterized by the weak central authority, and the rise of regional lords at the periphery especially the Northern provinces.

Hence, the beginning of 18th century, marked by stable political and military condition, was the circumstance under which the first lineage segmentation of the Feqat Harak clan took place. The two descendants of *Feq* Ahmedin (fourth linear generation), named Abubaker and *Feq* Husein splited and formed their autonomous lineage branch. The two currently existing lineage branches of the Feqat Harak were the result of the first lineage segmentation that occurred at this time. The first lineage segmentation was accompanied by the collateral settlement bifurcation. Previously, Andal was the only settlement center of the Feqat Harak, but after the first lineage segmentation a new settlement center, called Gadelo, was established by the splited lineage. The descendants of the *Feq* Husein's branch, later renamed to *Enda* Abdela, remained in Andal, while the Abubaker (later to be renamed to *Enda* Sofi) moved to Gadelo – the new settlement center.

Diagram 3.2 shows the lineage segmentation chart of the Feqat Harak refered from the family tree of my host family. My host family's head is Haj Suleiman, second from bottom. The chart represents only the *Enda* Abdela branch's (descendants of *Feq* Husein) lineage segmentation history. The first segmentation represents Abubaker's and *Feq* Husein's split and formation of their autonomous supra-clan unit. Soon, at the 7th generation the second segmentation of the *Enda* Abdela occurred, and the four descendants of *Feq* Abdela established their own lineage group. The four founders are Dawd Gura, Nebi Ishma'el, Ibrahim Misgun and Qadi Mohammad. The second segmentation multiplied immensely the number of supra-clan units among the Feqat Harak. It is not only the formation of four autonomous units that makes the

segmentation important, but the rapidity of the lineage segmentation is also an interesting phenomenon to investigate.

The rapidity of the lineage segmentation becomes more intriguing with the occurrence of the third lineage segmentation. The third segmentation occurred two generations after the second one. i.e. by the $9^{th}$ generation the descendants of Qadi Silan (Suleiman) established their own autonomous lineage units. As a result of the third, and last, lineage segmentation four autonomous supra-minimal lineages were established; Ismael Boka, Yofish, Ab Dawd and Isham'el. Thus, altogether the three successive and rapid lineage segmentation of the *Enda* Abdela branch of the Feqat Harak clan gave rise to a total of eight autonomous supra-clan units within a space of four generations ($5^{th}$, $7^{th}$ and $9^{th}$). After the third lineage segmentation, no subsequent segmentation occurred despite six generations passed by.

The rapidity of the lineage segmentation between the $5^{th}$ and $9^{th}$ generations is an important factor in the understanding the dynamics of segmentation in broader historical context. Presumably, internal and external factors interplayed to dictate the origin and course of the lineage segmentation. Internal factors do not require much adjustment to allow successful lineage segmentation due to the pastoral subsistence base of the society, and availability of adequate free space in the valleys, slopes and the lowlands. Comparatively speaking, the eastern escarpment and the eastern lowland are scarcely populated compared to the highland. And it was no coincidence that the three lineage segmentations occurred in the Nabagade Valley prior to the establishment of sedentary

villages in the Qohaito Plateau (which was a frontier between the sparely populated slopes and the densely populated highland).

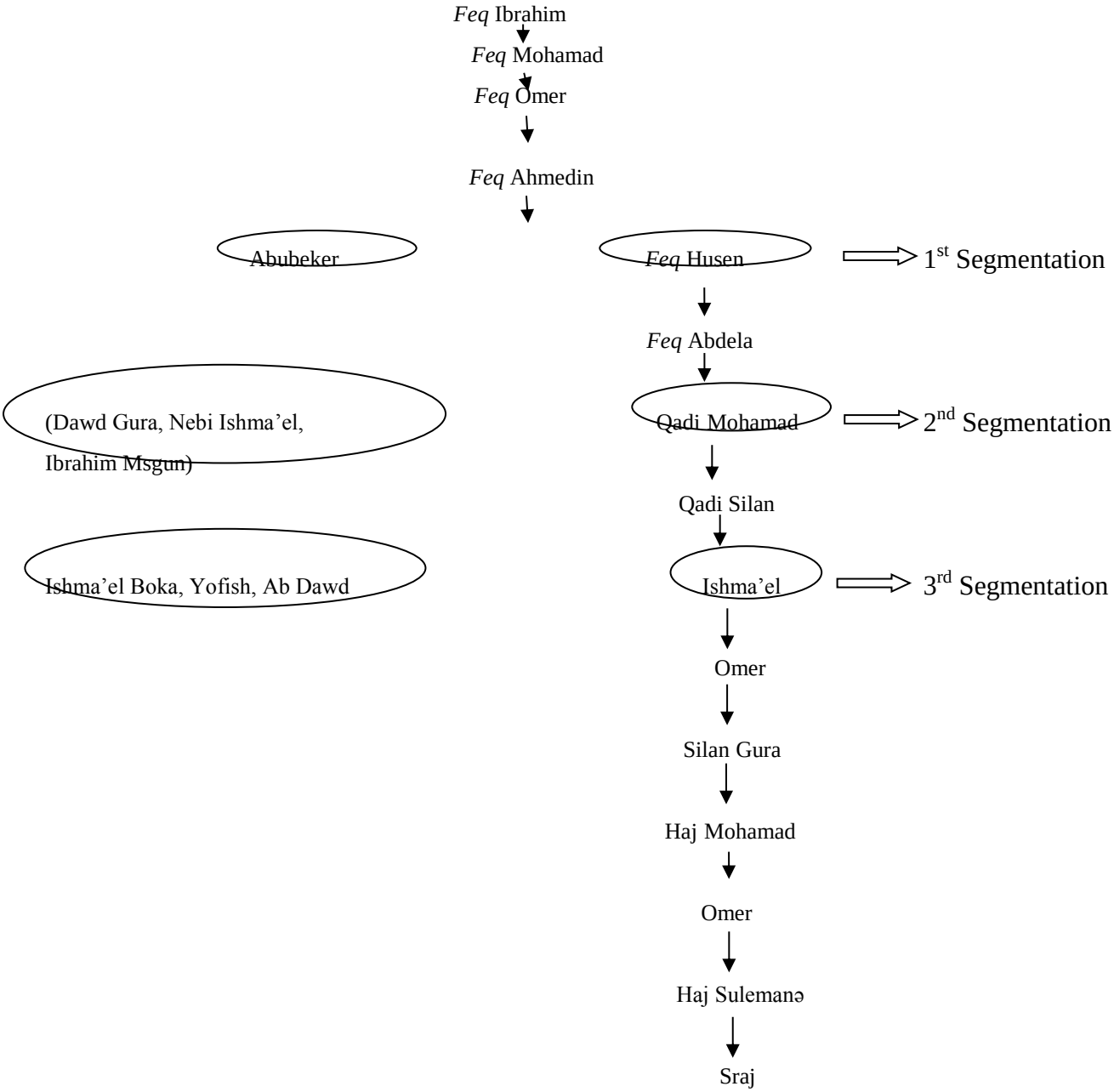



Diagram 3.2: Genealogical chart of the Enda Abdela branch of Feqat Harak with segmentation history of the lineage.

The pastoral subsistence base, as an internal factor, makes a segmentation to occur easily compared with the agricultural (agrarian) societies. For instance, Paul Bohannan

(1954) explanation of the Tiv segmentation illustrates the complicated and prolonged process of segmentation that may take an entire generation to complete. The gradual process among the Tiv starts when a new head constructs separate residence (compound), while continuing to farm the same collective fields near the village and a far. The next stage of the segmentation (compound splitting) is separation of agricultural fields, which signals the final step in the long process of segmentation. "Splitting a compound, then, is a stage in a much more complex social process; by and large these stages are expressed spatially in terms either of residence or farm land" (Bohannan 1954: 6). In agrarian community a strong affiliation is established between the people and the land, or permanent human-land relationship. Hence, lineage segmentation tends to be a complex and prolonged process. This can be demonstrated by the fact that the Feqat Harak had never experienced lineage segmentation in the plateau, where the principal mode of subsistence is agro-pastoralism, and characterize by limited resource availability.

The pastoral subsistence base however creates a favorable condition for lineage segmentation to occur and to be executed in short period of time. The seasonal transhumance movement prepares the families to a constant cycle of separation and integration. The transhumance movement split the family seasonally (winter) and reunite (summer), and thus the community is adjusted in this frame of social organization. Secondly, the pastoral mobility allows the families to get access to a large territory and since the Nabagade Valley and eastern lowland are scarcely populated due to climatic and topographic (rugged terrain) reasons, the pastoral society have large territory to graze on.

The causes of the rapid lineage segmentation and settlement expansion among the Feqat Harak were not limited to internal factors, but external factors such as the political, environmental and inter-ethnic (community) relationship share significant load in the process. As indicated above the chronological outline of the three successive lineage segmentation spans from the beginning to the end of the 18th century, based on standard 25 years range for a generation. The environmental history under which the series of lineage segmentation occurred is almost unknown because of the lack of environmental information. The oral history and textual evidences regarding the environmental history is totally dominated by the severe drought and environmental catastrophes of the 19th century. Environmental information of the 18th century is too rare, and the only reference for this period is inferred from the short description by James Bruce. He suggested that due to the epidemics of small pox the Saho population declined significantly. He also mentioned the Saho uprising against the Nayb rule. Bruce however did not cite about any environmental disaster, and on this ground we can presume that no remarkable environmental disaster occurred in that century, except the small pox epidemic.

A minor correlation can be created between the small pox epidemic and the occurrence of rapid lineage segmentation during this period. The correlation might be *positive* and *negative*. The *positive* correlation argues that the outbreak of small pox can stimulate the lineage group to expand geographically into safer area, and higher altitude areas are generally considered as safe. And one of the ways of expansion to escape small pox inflicted area is through lineage segmentation and residential splitting in orderly and

patterned way. The *negative* correlation on the other hand argues that small pox diminishes the population in the lineage, which in turn downplays the necessity and occurrence of lineage segmentation among the Feqat Harak due to population pressure. In sum, the environmental problem during the segmentation era, manifested in the small pox epidemics, exerted either directly or indirectly, the formation of new settlement center and repetitive lineage segmentation.

The political history of the 18th century, in my opinion, played a decisive role in the occurrence of rapid lineage segmentation among the Feqat Harak. Politically and territorially, the original homeland and early valley settlements of the Feqat Harak is situated between two higher forms of polity – Nayb (coast), and the Abyssinian Empire centered in Gondar (highland). The Feqat Harak occupies a territory that connects the trade route between both kingdoms, and hence they became subject to the consequences directly. The Nayb, representatives of the Ottoman Turks, had insignificant military presence in the 18th century, after repetitive failure to conquer territory in the highlands in the previous century. Hence, in the 18th century, the role of the Nayb was limited to tax collection in the coastal area and part of the escarpment. As Bruce noted, during the last quarter of the century, the Saho tribes defy the Nayb rule, and hence this demonstrates the weaker impact of the Naib (Ottoman) rule in the livelihood of the Saho tribes including the Feqat Harak. Thus, the impact of the weak Nayb rule might be a positive factor because the lineage group could expand freely towards the outer lying territory of the Turks.

A similar situation also prevailed in the highland, where a century after the Ahmed Gragn war, the devastating effects of the war could still be felt. The Ahmed Gragn war that occurred in the 16th century destroyed the important social, political, religious and military institutions of Abyssinia. The centralization of power in the new capital, Gondar, and the relatively distant location of the new capital further south weakened the control of the empire in the eastern lowlands and the Gulf of Zula. As a consequence, no regional lords especially in Northern Ethiopia (Tigray), which is the immediate neighborhood of the Nabagade-Qohaito region, prevailed. The Tigray province including the Southern highlands of Eritrea in the 18th century had no regional power, which has far reaching influence at regional level. The only regional power that was active in the Eritrean highlands was centered in the town of Dubarwa, the seat of Bahri Negasi (king of the sea), again located very far from the Qohaito Plateau and Nabagade Valley.

It was only at the beginning of the 19th century, perhaps associated with the increasing fire arms trade in the region, that regional lords especially in Tigray province of Ethiopia and parts of Eritrean highlands began to emerge. Besides the increase in fire arms trade, the collapse of Gondarian Era, also played a significant role in the emergence of regional lords at the periphery (such as Tigray and Eritrea). As a result of the rise of these regional lords in the Nabagade-Qohaito became under direct influence in the wake of the expansion ambition of Tigrean lords; such as Ras Sabagadis. Ras Sabagadis could even extend his control to the coastal city of Massawa in the mid-19th century. Hence, we can conclude that the absence of major powers in the vicinity of

Qohaito-Nabagade area and the distant location of the new capital possibly affected the Feqat Harak's segmentation and territorial expansion.

## 3. 4. Post-Lingeage Segmentation Period

Although the Feqat Harak history continued for about four hundred years, the three segmentations repetitively occurred at the second hundred years of its timescale. Meaning, there has never been lineage segmentation for the last two hundred years in the clan. During the active segmentation period of the lineage group, the number of supra-clan maximized, and the eight sub-units of the *Enda* Abdela branch were formed during that period. In addition to the maximization of the supra-clans, the Feqat Harak could expand geographically in the Nabagade Valley, and the formation of sedentary village continued. The previous section argued comparatively that the lineage segmentation occur more easily among the pastoral society rather than the agrarian society, where the social features of the society is prone to continuous separation and reintegration cycles.

The only serious requirement for successful lineage segmentation among pastoralists is the need to maintain the ritual/ceremonial, judiciary and religious and judiciary integrity of the lineage group. The Feqat Harak continued united in this respect by maintaining the ancestral homeland, Andal, as the ritual/ceremonial, religious (prayer and burial) and judiciary epicenter of the religious group. The village of Andal now has a large grave yard, remains of the large village ruins, and remains of ceremonial site usually under tree that testify the village's high relevance in the Feqat Harak mundane and

symbolic livelihood. Recently, a new burial site has been formed in two locations in the Qohaito Plateau, and similarly the judiciary role of the traditional court in Andal waned after the independence of Eritrea, and the reconstitution of new customary court under the auspice of the state. The religious and ceremonial value of the site however continued to this day.

The post-segmentation era of the Feqat Harak starts from the early 19$^{th}$ century, and continue up to present day. Now let us ask how the major developments especially settlement expansion that occurred during the segmentation period continued in the post-segmentation period. As indicated above the two major outcomes of the lineage segmentation were the increase in the number of supra-clans, and the territorial expansion and formation of new settlement centers such as Gadelo. After the cessation of the lineage segmentation, the number of supra-clan remains, of course, constant, and perhaps declines, if a lineage unit disappeared. Thus the logical question is whether the territorial expansion and formation of new settlement centers continued or receded in the post-segmentation period. This helps to examine the lineage-settlement relationship or will deconstruct the segmentary lineage theory by repositioning segmentation as integral (not the only) factor in the process along with other equally valuable variables.

Oral history and settlement pattern indices show that the formation of new settlement centers and satellite villages increase in the post-segmentation period. It was not only increased, but the expansion of the sedentary villages even penetrated into new ecological zone – highland (Qohaito Plateau). Meaning, during the segmentation phase of the Feqat Harak, the lineage group expanded only into the Nabagade Valley, where

as in post-segmentation period it expanded further and broader into Qohaito Plateau. Hence, it was after the complete cessation of lineage segmentation that the expansion of sedentary villages from Nabagade Valley to Qohaito Plateau occurred[15]. Thus, which factors substituted in the post segmentation period the role segmentation used to play during the segmentation period?

I will concentrate my discussion on the expansion of sedentary villages from Nabagade Valley to Qohaito Plateau, rather than focusing on both the expansion in the valley and into the plateau. This highlights greater variability of data, and the variability of data will introduce new parameters to formulate comprehensive understanding of the historical process. The oral history and settlement pattern remains, especially cave dwellings, recount that prior to the formation of sedentary villages in Qohaito, the Feqat Harak and other Saho lineage groups used to practice seasonal transhumance in the plateau. Surfacial and stratigraphic findings in the caves and rock shelter sites proves short term dwelling that had been in practice for several centuries in the area. In the beginning of the 19$^{th}$ century, the Qohaito Plateau was an open and buffer zone between the Saho pastoralists and Tigrinya agrarian communities. The territory was not claimed by any entity or political body. It was during this period that the first unsuccessful expansion attempt by the Feqat Harak to Qohaito Plateau took place.

According to Ahmad Shum, the first unsuccessful attempt to form sedentary villages in the Qohaito Plateau took place in the time of Qadi Silan, and the main reason for the

[15] A cautionary note should be kept in mind that the segmentation was the prime agent of territorial expansion and settlement organization during the first half of the lineage's history. Thus, we have to bear in mind that lineage segmentation is responsible for the settlement pattern of the lineage group.

attempt was to get access to new pastureland. According to his narrative, none of the contemporary villages prevailed, and no other entity claim the possession of the territory. This happened during Qadi Silan, who lived at the interphase between the second and third segmentation (about 225 years ago). Since this period, the Feqat Harak's livestock (herd) were collectively grazed in the village called Le'ali'o. And this leads us to the fact that pre-sedentary village occupation of the Feqat Harak in Qohaito Plateau existed. But according to the informant, the Feqat Harak later abandoned the seasonal pastoral migration to Qohaito plateau due to the continuous cattle raid and plunder by some highland chiefs from the neighboring Tigrinya society. Thus, any attempt to establish permanent settlement center during the segmentation era was a failure, and hence the current villages in the Qohaito Plateau were established after the segmentation period.

The second and successful formation of sedentary village in Qohaito Plateau by the Feqat Harak was four generation ago. The first settlers were Ansara, One Kelil, Ali Qe and Ali Abubaker. These founders of permanent villages lived four-five generations ago, and this period coincided with major environmental and political developments that have far reaching impact in the region (Horn of Africa). The end of $19^{th}$ century in general is decisive period at continental level, where the mixture of local, regional and international factors contributed to shape the political, economic and social future of the continent. The two outstanding factors that determine the expansion of Feqat Harak into Qohaito Plateau are the environmental changes (disasters) and the advent of Italian among the regional (local factors) the inter-ethnic relationship with Tigrinya society. The full discussion of these factors will be presented in the following chapters, and the

remaining part of this chapter discusses the community level inter-ethnic relationship in detail.

## 3.5. Community Interaction and New Spatial Configuration

The post-segmentation expansion of the Feqat Harak to the Qohaito Plateau opens wide analytical gate for non-lineage (segmentation) variables that shaped the historical process. The entire stretch of the Qohaito Plateau was divided by the 19th century among three Tigrinya regional chiefs. The northern section of the plateau belonged to Aret district, the Central Qohaito to Tekonda'e, and the southern to Gramaten. The Saho tribes and lineage group used to pay a 'rent/lease' to these three principalities until the mid-1970s – socialist reform in Ethiopia. This relationship between the pastoral Saho tribes and agrarian Tigrinya communities, possibly started in the 19th century, was mediated by the frontier landscape of the Qohaito Plateau, and hence followed a unique and special trajectory of formation of inter-community relationship based on new forms of inter-ethnic principle. In order to reconstruct the conditions under which this community and landscape relation prevailed, let us explore first the political situation of the area by the 19th century.

The village of Tekonda'e, which claims possession over Central Qohaito Plateau gradually, grew in significance in the beginning of the 19th century. Krapf travelled in Abyssinia from 1839 to 1842, and went deep into Abyssinian territory from Zeila (around Assab) to Ankober and Gondar. On his way back to Massawa, he followed the route Gondar – Tigray – Tekonda'e – Qohaito – Massawa. He noted that by 1840s the

Governor of Tekonda'e, Habta Michael (Habtemichael) agreed with the Governor of Massawa to change the trade route from Tekonda'e – Halai – Arkeeko – Massawa to a new trade route passing through Tekonda'e and Qohaito. As a result of their agreement the new trade route was established. Krapf believed that he was the first European to travel along the new route. The importance of his description to the current study is first the changing context of the geo-political and commercial circumstances of the trade route in the 19th century in the region. Secondly the contact zone created by the village of Tekonda'e and the Qohaito Plateau and its surrounding between two different communities economically, religiously, social organizational attributes … etc.

Tekonda'e, according to his description, is the last Tigrinya village facing the eastern escarpment, and only a mile away from it started Saho village, and for more than fifty miles from that location up to Massawa as Hotten described is 'undisputed Saho possession' (Hotten 1868: 209). Detail examination of this contact or frontier zone is very essential in understanding the non-lineage processes undergoing between mutually beneficial communities that led to the gravitation of bilateral community relations, which finally resulted in the '*repopulation*' of Qohaito Plateau. Some excerpt from Krapf's reads as follows;

> "April 30, 1842. The governor [Habtemichael] promised this morning that he would send to the next Shoho [Saho] village for a guide to take us to Arkeeko … After walking about a mile we reached a well, which is spring of a river running to the Samhar. The people of Tekunda must go thus far to fetch their water. Tekunda is a small hamlet, situated on a hill; but now it is important on account of

> communication with the sea, and I believe I am the first European who went this new route, which ever fall into the old road after you have travelled about 10 miles" (Krapf 1968: 521-523).

This description implies several important points that are necessary for our understanding the geo-political and commercial situation prevailing in the region. The village of Tekonda'e was just on the rise in the first half of the century to become a regional power. By the end of the century, the village will be a major political center with expanded territory and a chief, and the Italian colonial recognized the traditional chief with new colonial title. Another important reference in this description is the boundary between the village of Tekonda'e and the Saho village, which was a mile away from Tekonda'e. This boundary still exists, and currently is called 'Ruba Mesalih' (Mesalih River), located around the mouth of River Hadas (as the author clearly stipulated). This locality is found at the western foot of the Qohaito Plateau. This site and the nearby village called Ziban Meroro occupy considerable significance in the oral tradition of the Saho, and interestingly this site is portrayed as the last check point (tax station) of the Assaurta trade route that goes from the coast to the Abyssinian highlands.

This takes us to the exploration of the political situation of the valleys, both Hadas and Nabagade, in the same century. Ibrahim Shum, a respected Saho orator and folk teller, explains the trade route that goes from the coast to the highland that the Assaurta pan-tribe controlled. This trade route prevailed before the coming of the Italians to Massawa. According to him, there were four tax collection stations from Massawa to Qohaito – Bab Ashera (Massawa), Mahya, Hadas Valley and Ruba Mesalih, and every

trade caravan was subject to pay a tax at each station. Most of the trade caravans were from southern Eritrea and some provinces in Tigray (Edaga Hamus, Zalambesa … etc). The tax collectors charge a handful from a donkey pack, and *mi'ero* (about a kilo) from a mule-pack. Later, the trade route and tax collection became illegitimate with the coming of the Italians, and the Assaurta tribe lost legitimacy for tax collection in the trade route. The Assaurta oral tradition recounts the episode for the loss of their tax right as follows;

> "The Assaurta was collecting tax from every trader passing these stations except members of the Feqat Harak minimal lineage. The Feqat Harak was exempted from the tax obligation due to their honorable religious popularity and prayer gifts sake. Then, other non-Feqat Harak traders began to falsely claim belongingness to Feqat Harak in order to evade the tax obligation. Later, in the annual report the revenue was very low, and the tribe leaders concluded that it was due to the exemption of Feqat Harak that subjected them to wider cheating. Hence, the Assaurta alleviated the tax privilege previously offered to the Feqat Harak. One day, a Sheikh who belongs to Feqat Harak genuinely came into the tax station at Ruba Mesalih, and out of his expectation he was ordered to pay tax. He resisted, and claimed his minimal lineage is not supposed to pay any tax to the Assaurta. Finally, he was forced to pay and before he paid the amount, he took off his turban, and put it in the ground. He did this trice and cursed "may the authority of the Assaurta fade away". He then left, and very soon the Italians came and cancelled the legitimacy of Assaurta tax collection". (Ibrahim Shum, interview).

The actual incidence of the collapse of Assaurta tax collection occurred when Italians occupied Massawa in 1885. The Italian authorities challenged the Assaurta chiefs, and questioned the legitimacy of their tax, because the Assaurta tribe did not pay tax to the Italian authorities. Assaurta chiefs, a coalition of five tribes, were then summoned to Massawa to discuss the issue with the Italian officers. Five chiefs representing each tribe went to Massawa for the meeting; Shum Omer Shum Suleiman (Bet Lelish), Shum Omerdin Shum Ibrahim (Asa Kare), Shum Mosa Ahmedin (Asa Lesan) Shum Abubaker Naser (Bet Faqorota) and Qadi Ibrahim Abdu (Bet *Feq* Lelish). The Italian authorities asked why the Assaurta collected tax without the approval of the Italian administration in Massawa. The Assaurta chiefs replied that they had to collect in order to feed the army (Gombele, which means warrior class), and to pay salary for the chiefs. They justified the need for the army to protect their territory from cattle raid expeditions from neighboring communities. The Italian officers, on behalf of Italian government, promised to provide food for the army in a precondition to limit the size of the army smaller and constitute soldiers above eighteen years old only, and to pay salary for the chiefs again in precondition that their allegiance is to the Italian empire. The five chiefs agreed with the offer, and accepted the agreement honorably partly due to the famine and drought that stroke the area badly. Later the five chiefs, who made the deal, summoned a general (pan-tribe) meeting in a place called Feter, and announced the terms of the deal. The people replied, "if they (Italians) guard our border and secure us from raid and plunder, and if they pay the salary of our chiefs, we agree with the terms" (Ibrahim Shum, interview). Thus, the Assaurta's segmentary state became integrated late in the 19$^{th}$ to the Italian principality in Massawa, and it came to an end.

Now let us return to our original point that under what political circumstance did a new community interaction framed in new territorial principle evolved. The new form of bilateral community interaction was based on land lease, locally called *sibdi*, emerged between these communities and the Qohaito Plateau became the platform for the new inter-community negotiations. The Qohaito Plateau was divided among three Tigrinya principalities (Tekonda'e, Aret and Gramaten), and each principality engaged in one to one relationship with separate Saho lineage groups. Tekonda'e which claimed Central Qohaito paired with Feqat Harak clan. This interaction intensified largely due to shared interest on two economic grounds. Both fields of economic interest were adequately discussed by the numerous travelers, missionaries and diplomatic personnel who travelled the trade passage.

The first field of economic interaction that unfolded new forms of community interaction was the mutual exchange of pastoral and agriculture products. Each community at the frontier undergoes a highly specialized subsistence activity; pastoralism in the case of Feqat Harak, and sedentary agriculture in the case of Tekonda'e and other Tigrinya communities. Both communities heavily depend on the primary product of the partner, and despite marked differences in their livelihood, these communities forged a sustainable exchange network. As a result, a traditional mechanism of lease-tenant relation evolved at community (lineage) level and hence the 19$^{th}$ century the Feqat Harak became officially tenant to the Tekonda'e principality. Certain amount of payment in kind was fixed, and by paying the amount the Feqat Harak was granted usufruct right.

The terms of the agreement is a win-win type, because the open uninhabited Qohaito Plateau is a pasture and arable land for the Feqat Harak for very small amount of payment. Secondly, the villagers of Tekonda'e cannot exploit and utilize the resources in Qohaito, because of logistical, man-power and geographical accessibility constraints. Agriculture in this region is very intensive in summer, and both cultivation and harvest demand intensive labor. It is even difficult sometimes for the villagers to work the fields around their village. Similarly, the plough animals have to travel long distance over a steep mountain to reach the plateau, and hence all factors downplay the possibility of the villagers to actually use the agricultural or pastoral resources of the plateau by themselves. As a result, they can welcome any reliable community partnership to utilize the plateau on symbiotic ground.

The second type of economic opportunity that grew the attraction between the bi-communities at the borderland is the trade route and commercial connection. The trade route from the coast to the highland passes through the contact zone. It is this particular location that connects/intersects the lowland and escarpment course and the highland. This strategic location grants varieties of economic opportunity such as escort, periodic station or market, access to merchandize and commodities, market for product … and so on. This could be an interesting component in the formation of new patterns of inter-community relations. The command in the trade route is an essential feature that both societies could benefit from. The entire Abyssinian highland depend majority of its international trade on this trade route. The flow of trade (export) from the highland includes agricultural products, spices, hide, slave, and so on. The imported commodities include salt, animal product, fire arms and ammunition, metal ware and other industrial

products. In addition to the favorable political and social conditions that foster community interaction, other factors especially the environmental disasters that occurred repetitively in the second half of the 19th century must be key factor in the process of new community interaction. Because, it was in this century, as Parkyns (1853) noted that the Saho began to involve in rudimentary agricultural activities that quickly grew into full practice in few decades.

The inter-community interaction between the Feqat Harak and Tekonda'e appears to be initially originated in the common descent both have. Appendix 2 illustrates that the apical ancestor of the Feqat Harak share descent with some families in Tekonda'e. One of the three brothers of the apical ancestor migrated and settled in Tekonda'e, and both the Feqat Harak and the villagers reckon the common descent. But, in the course of interaction the economic dimension became more articulated, although the reckoning into common descent remained organic part in the bilateral relationship. The close friendship between the Degiat Zahlay of Tekonda'e and Qadi Abdela, chief of the Feqat Harak, elaborates the economic relationship crafted on common descent fabric. As explained in previous section, the introduction of full-based agriculture in Qohaito Plateau of the Feqat Harak is attributed to the tight friendship of these two historical figures. And hence, the evolution of the new forms of community relationship culminated in the ritual called, *Ziyari Tena*, which marked the beginning of agriculture among the Feqat Harak in Qohaito.

In conclusion, this section discusses how the settlement expansion of the Feqat Harak from Nabagade Valley to Qohaito Plateau took place in the post-segmentation period of

the lineage group. The formation of new bi-ethnic community interaction at the borderland of the Saho and Tigrinya societies was the driving factors that the members of Feqat Harak clan were able to expand through without lineage segmentation. This analysis will continue in chapter six along with convincing settlement and architectural data that show the mutual interaction at community level.

# Chapter Four

## *The Spread of Sedentary Villages from the Nabagade Valley to Qohaito Plateau*

A historical and structural oriented settlement pattern approach renders profitable outlook to the study of the complex and intertwined processes of the formation and spread of sedentary villages from the Nabagade Valley to Qohaito Plateau. This chapter and the following pursue the two axes of settlement inquiry adapted in this dissertation. This chapter discusses the first axis by examining the distribution of sedentary villages in a chronological and historical manner, and secondly by outlining the causal factors determining the process. The distribution and the spatial configuration of sedentary villages across the valley and plateau illustrate the elements affecting the historical process, and the embedded meaning of the spatial layout of the settlements. A higher focus will be devoted to the forms and changes of the village layouts, as an indicator of the adaptive strategy and social and historical context under which the formation and changes took place. Means noted "changes in the village's layout reflect lessons learned from earlier manifestations of a community and development of new or modification of extant social institutions to better manage increasingly large groups of people working and living alongside one another" (Means 2007: 5). This approach envisions that the spatial organization of villages and homesteads, and the introduction of new spatial configuration is the reflection of the collective (community level) adjustment and readjustment process.

The analytical variables employed in this research broadly are the *geomorphological* nature of the valley and plateau, and *anthropomorphic* parameters related to the lineage organization, location of settlement in relation to iconic landforms, land use pattern, inter-community (ethnic) interaction and regional actors affecting the settlement pattern. Discrete variables constantly referred in the discussion include lineage segmentation processes, demography, terrain and landscape, climatic and environmental features, segmentary nature of social organization, inter-community/ethnic interaction, massive environmental changes and catastrophes, regional and continental phenomena and competition for new territories, and subsistence activities.

The *geomorphological* characteristic of the research area affecting the formation and distribution of villages is manifested in the variety forms of settlement locations; hilltop, cliff, slope, riverine, plateau and deltaic settlements. Similarly, the *anthropomorphic* elements of the settlement pattern of the valley and plateau are exhibited historically through the variation in size and permanence of village, nodal interaction among various settlements, duration and season of occupation, lineage composition (supra-clan segments or uni-segment/multi-segment) and bilateral oriented inter-community relationship and exchange system. In archaeological context, Liu et al. (2002) suggested that the ultimate goal of settlement pattern studies is to comprehend the factors that determine the arrangement (distribution) of sites in a region. Following this direction, preliminary and advanced inferences could be carried out regarding the process of the formation and expansion of settlement in these two ecological and topographic regions.

The study of the distribution of homestead, wards and village, and their spatial organization will not be limited to merely physical description. These parameters according to Michael Smyth et al. (1995) are the tangible (material) remains of the settlement such as wall type, geometrical layout, shape and size of buildings … etc. They pointed out that it is the immaterial (intangible) aspect of settlement that deserves the highest emphasis. "It is the intangible aspect of past settlement organization (interaction, relationship and activities of people) that are real subject of archaeological inquiry" (Smyth et al. 1995: 321). The intangible aspects of the settlement pattern are the functional attributes and symbolic expression of the dwelling and village plan, expressed as in the domestic space organization and relationship among various spatial sections of the dwelling. This chapter emphasizes on the functional and structural elements of the settlement pattern of the Feqat Harak rather than on the symbolic. Hence, a general synthesis and comprehensive discussion of the material and immaterial aspects of village and compound architecture will be presented.

This chapter will first discuss the ethnographic and ethnohistorical data regarding the formation and expansion of sedentary villages in the Nabagade Valley and Qohaito Plateau. The discussion covers the entire period of the clan starting from the formation of the first settlement in Andal up to the recent village of Wekeiro founded in 1994. The discussion is organized by dividing the entire temporal range of the process into major historical phases. The second major theme of this chapter is the comparison of village layout to hypothesize the kinds of changes that occurred in the social makeup and settlement system of the people, and how they gave rise to new forms of social relations.

The detail routes of expansion to the Qohaito Plateau and their spatial and lineage configuration will be discussed.

For historical and proccessual purpose this section will divide the historical process of village formation and expansion into four chronological stages (phases); *Early Andal*, *Expansion in the Valley*, *Expansion to Qohaito Plateau*, and *Dispersal and Aftermath* (1970s). The *Early Andal* phase of the Feqat Harak covers the period from the formation of Andal as ancestral homeland up to the first settlement bifurcation (5$^{th}$ generation), where Gadelo was formed as the second sedentary settlement center in the history of the clan. The second phase, *Expansion in the Valley*, covers the period from the beginning of the first settlement split (Andal-Gadelo) until the beginning of Valley-Plateau expansion (end of the 19$^{th}$ century). Majority of the current settlement centers and villages in the Nabagade Valley were formed in this phase, and coincidentally the beginning and end of this phase marked the onset and cessation of the three lineage segmentations of the clan. The third stage, *Valley-Plateau Expansion*, is the most complicated process, where variety of internal and external factors played remarkable role to determine the intensity and direction of expansion. The Valley-Qohaito expansion took place roughly from the early 19$^{th}$ century and was completed by the turn of the next century. By 1910s-1920s the formative period of village formation in Qohaito Plateau came to an end, and several agrarian villages have flourished in the plateau. Finally, the last section, referred as *Dispersal and Aftermath*, accounts the disintegration and reconstitution of the villages in the Qohaito Plateau following the conflict associated with the Eritrean war of independence.

## 4.1. Early Andal

After his upbringing in Zula (maternal residence) *Feq* Mohammad Jn. established his residence in Andal, which ever since became the ancestral land, and ritual and ceremonial epicenter (capital) of the Feqat Harak. Andal was the permanent residence of the son of the apical ancestor, and after the formation of Andal several sedentary villages were formed in the space of roughly four hundred years in the valley and the plateau. The last villages in the sequence of sedentary village formation were Mashur and Wekeiro, inhabited by the two lineage branches, in the 1990s.

The village of Andal is located near a small tributary called Arbaba'e. Since the area is the entrance of the middle course of the stream, Andal has relatively flat terrain. The village is situated at 5540ft above sea level with GPS reading of $14^{0}52^{1}974^{11}$ North and $039^{0}21^{1}156^{11}$East. As noted above, the formation of Andal as sedentary village and eventually ancestral land occurred during the second generation of the lineage group and continued to be the only sedentary village until the $5^{th}$ generation. Generally speaking, the early Andal period ranges from the 1600 to 1700 AD. This was the immediate century after the devastating Ahmed Gragn War[16], and as consequence of the war the regional trade across the territory of Feqat Harak collapsed. Hence, the only subsistence base of the clan was pastoralism with seasonal movement to seasonal pastures in the lowland and occasionally to the plateau.

[16] Ahmed Gragn war (1524-1543) occurred in Abyssinian Highland, and was fought between Portuguese backed Christian forces and Ottoman Turks backed Muslim forces.

The oral history does not clearly recount the nature of houses, territorial organization and settlement pattern of Andal in its formative period. The surfacial findings and settlement remains of Andal derived from my reconnaissance archaeological survey can shed light on the nature and growth homestead in the village. The surfacial findings of the settlement remains of Andal can be classified into three distinct categories; *residential, burial* and *religious* parts. The *residence* section of Andal represents the largest proportion of the site, and the configuration village plan has circular morphology with nucleated pattern. Households are close to each other, and the cluster of houses has circular orientation. Due to high erosion rate and the location of some houses at the foot of hills, many homesteads might be buried by the alluvial deposits.

The extensive settlement remains of abandoned homesteads (residence) are now mostly ruined due to prolonged abandonment and natural process of weathering. I identified a total of 26 households (compounds) in the site, where 21 compounds have *agudo* (hut) type of architecture, whereas 5 *nahsa* (rectangular or square) type of house. The *agudo* with circular plan is the traditional architecture type in the valley or generally among the Saho pastoral communities, and *nahsa* was introduced after significant subsistence transformation and cross-ethnic interaction. During my field work, March to April 2015, the village was almost totally abandoned, due to valley-plateau migration that became intensified after 2008 severe drought. Only two families were living during my field visit – families of Isma'el Abdala Hamado, and Osman Suleiman.

Some authors in the next centuries describe that the Saho tribes in general dwell in either caves or huts, which implies high tendency of nomadic pastoralism. Parkyns

described the settlement outline and dwelling type of Saho villages that he visited in the mid-18th century. He noted;

> "The Shoho camp … huts instead of tents … villages are composed of huts, formed of straw an bough of trees, neatly enough fashioned, and thatched; they are placed so as to form a circle, with one or two spaces left as entrance being closed by bushes strewed before them" (Parkyns 1853: 51).

This description, although refers to the next century and not to the Feqat Harak directly, significantly correlates with the surficial findings of Andal. The huts, made of thatched grasses and bough, and the arrangement of the huts in circular orientation in the village display interesting match between the survey result and the traveler's description. This form of village plan had been given different meaning by structural-functional and symbolic anthropologists. For instance, Schapra developed the Central Cattle Pattern (CCP) in southern Africa; "Compounds are arranged physically into 'terraced' circle, each ward is found simultaneously a political unit and a cluster of compounds containing house individual family groups" (Fewster 2006: 64). The CCP has hypothesizes a political and economic symbol of pastoral societies in southern Africa manifested in the circular arrangement of houses with central courtyard used as communal pen, and the orderly arrangement of houses in relation to the political and social rank.

Alternatively, Bernard Means studied, indeed developed models, the circular layout of traditional villages in Northeast America, and instead of looking circular village as

reflection of eco-political manifestation, he tends to associate the layout with the cosmological belief of the inhabitants. He noted, "the layout of ring shaped settlement is intentionally manipulated to reinforce the local social order and often is explicitly perceived as a microcosm of the universe, rather than passively reflecting its constituent social" (Means 2007: 64). He is not only affirming the cosmological correlation of the village plan, but also deconstructing the notion that village plan is concomitant with the social groups dwelling the site.

Andal's circular (semi-circular), especially with reference to Parkyn's description, captures economic and political driven settlement pattern. The presence of central courtyard in the settlement might be related with the collective grazing practices of the minimal lineage that is recounted in the oral history, and similar collective camp existed in the village of Le'ali'o. Ahmad Shum (Interview) narrated that in the early days of the clan the movement to seasonal pastures was conducted collectively, and the specific location in the plateau (prior to sedentism) were considered as 'collective graze-ground'. In some contemporary agro-pastoral villages in the plateau, such as Ab'a, the semi-circular village plan is visibly used to enclose the collective garden at the nucleus of the village, and the homesteads orbit around the collective garden.

Andal continued as the sole settlement center, with satellite camps around it, of the Feqat Harak for four generations (roughly for a century), and due to the small population size of the clan, the expansion of the village must had been slow. Jesse Casana (2007) argued that the structural transformation of settlement system depend on the decision making related with the site morphology, land use strategy and

environmental relationship. Settlement expansion or contraction is thus the result of the combination of the ecological resources and decision making of the inhabitants. Due to the small population, transhumant nature, and relatively recent formation of the village, it is highly unlikely that the first settlers of Andal developed a complex land use practice that might lead to quick expansion of the village.

Smyth et al. differently viewed the expansion and growth of settlement and noted; "both functional and heterogeneity and internal activity differentiation appear to have been important elements of site organization" (Smyth et al. 1995: 321). This opinion is particularly important in studying not merely the settlement growth, but the process of social differentiation (stratification) too. Because, heterogeneity and functional diversity are the core ingredients of social differentiation and ranking. All homesteads have similar architectural forms, which imply functional similarity or lack of any differentiations. And the absence of big structures in the site downplays any possibility of social differentiation. Meaning, the homogenous architectural remain and the absence of monumental structures confirm the egalitarian nature of the occupants in early Andal period. So, settlement growth can only occur through a gradual cyclical expansion of the village when identical homesteads were added in the outer margins of the village in purely mechanical fashion.

In addition to the residential site of Andal, a large *burial* ground is located at the northern part of the village, and contains about 450 individual graves where more than 260 are partially destroyed and the remaining 190 are in good condition. The total surface area of the burial ground is about 300m by 150m, which given the local context

of village size makes it a super large grave field. The site was the only burial for the clan until recently, second half of the 20th century. Otherwise despite strictly Islamic in their manner and conduct, the Feqat Harak continued to travel the dead body to Andal for funeral regardless of the place of death. The existing burial ground is the collection of three centuries grave yard, and presumptively the site either extends beyond the exposed burial ground or part of the site has been eroded by river.

Moreover, there is frequent occurrence of circular *religious sites* with an average diameter of 3 to 4 meters, enclosed either by 1m high stone wall or just single stone enclosure, called *Mesjid* (Mosque). Another ceremonial part of Andal is the ceremonial site for ancestor veneration, under big cider tree, and the same site is used as the judiciary site (customary court), and to oversee legal matters. In sum, early Andal, the first hundred years of the lineage group, was the period where the members of the lineage group remained in single principal settlement with satellite villages, and cattle camps. The clan life was homogenous, and the members continue to practice seasonal transhumance movement to the lowland and the plateau.

## 4.2. Expansion in the Valley

This phase roughly started at the beginning of 18th century, and entry into this phase was marked by the collateral processes of the first lineage segmentation and settlement bifurcation. As noted earlier in detail, the first segmentation occurred at the 5th generation, where the descendants of *Feq* Ahmedin split into two supra-clan branches. And the newly formed segments established a separate sedentary village called Gadelo.

The formation of autonomous segment parallel with the formation of Gadelo as the settlement center marked the beginning of rapid lineage segmentations and frequent settlement expansion in the valley. This continued until the 9th generation (early 19th century), when the lineage segmentation ceased after three rounds that occurred at regular interval.

The formation of Gadelo as new settlement implies only the residential aspect of the segmentation. The sacred, ritual and judiciary activities of the clan continued to be carried out in Andal. Until recently the traditional court based on Sharia law continued in Andal. With the introduction of pan-Saho customary law and modern settlement and migration during British Military Administration the traditional court in Andal gradually disappeared. The religious significance of Andal as burial site for the Feqat Harak faced similar historical fate to that of judiciary. The large burial site in Andal demonstrates that all members of the clan regardless of their residence were supposed to be buried in Andal, and this illustrates the religious significance associated to the ancestral land. But now there are two burial sites in the plateau, and the need to travel to Andal for funeral became conditional. Finally, the ritual significance of Andal however remains preserved up to this time. Although the village is almost uninhabited (nearly abandoned), it currently hosts the annual ancestor veneration ritual of the Feqat Harak. On the 15th May of each year, the descendants celebrate the ancestor veneration ritual and every house is expected to send a representative to the ritual.

This period shows the highest level of interconnectedness between lineage segmentation and settlement expansion, where every lineage segmentation was followed by a

formation of new settlement centers in the valley. As the result of the century-long expansion, five additional settlement centers were formed; Gerwan, Dalo, Garadaf, Sarwa and Medhulo. This maximized the number of settlement centers of the Feqat Harak in the valley into a total of seven settlement centers, including Andal and Gadelo. Except for Andal and Gadelo, there is no clear chronological or temporal time scale of formation of the five settlement centers. Neither the oral tradition nor any other written sources indicate which among the five settlement centers was formed first or next. From the genealogical accounts of the lineage however we can reconstruct that Garadaf was the last settlement center in the sequence of settlement formation. Because all the four settlement centers are composed of homogenous lineage group affiliated to Feqat Harak clan.

Garadaf on the other hand is a multi-clan settlement center composed of several clans belonging to Minifere *kisho*. It is not only the composition of lineage groups that makes Garadaf distinct from the other settlement centers. The topography and subsistence (land use) pattern also differentiates the settlement center from the others. Topographically, Garadaf is located at an extensive plain located at the confluence of three tributaries that have wide banks and riverine topography that supports spate irrigation. Thus Garadaf must be established after the introduction of incipient agriculture/horticulture, and this have probably occurred in the next phase. The introduction of agriculture in the valley and the plateau is roughly estimated to the last quarter of the 19$^{th}$ century, because one of the indicators of the process of introduction is the hereditary land holding of farm fields. The current generation counts serially 5$^{th}$

generation of inheritance, and hence implies the introduction of agriculture by the end of 19th century and the turn of the new century.

Comparatively speaking, unlike Garadaf, the other four new settlement centers are located in narrow valley, gorges and slopes with no flat terrain favorable for cultivation. Besides the topographic variation, the four settlements have different subsistence activities from the Garadaf. The dominant subsistence base of these settlements is pastoralism with rare bee farm. Recently however some villages, although located in the slopes, are introducing horticultural activities. The village of Eshika has become a garden village since 1970s. The villagers cultivate rain-fed fields in summer as well as irrigated fields in winter from wells around the village. They commonly cultivate cash crops such as cabbage, tomato, mustard leaf, contra leaf and tobacco, and rarely fruits.

The layout of the settlement centers along with the satellite villages in the Nabagade Valley is a crucial analytical variable. Majority of the settlement centers have dispersed village plan, predominantly due to the geomorphological character, lineage homogeneity and demographic scarcity, subsistence activities prone to movement and indigenous definition of settlement. The customary law of the Saho society defines a cluster of five homesteads/households as a village, and recognizes its right to reserve pasture and water points. The usufruct rights of any family, according to the law, remain preserved if the family does not abandon the property (pasture or farm lands) for four consecutive years. Thus the dispersed mode of settlement characterizes the overall settlement pattern in the Nabagade Valley, except in Andal.

Andal as we note previously has circular plan with a burial and religious sites. We can categorize this village layout as a nucleated type, but not precisely a nucleated one due to the presence of satellite hamlets and villages. So, I would create a separate class of settlement layout that can be referred as *semi-nucleated*. A classificatory scheme needs to follow certain kind of order or pattern so as to show the trend of progress or regress. Birch (2013) noted "common classificatory scheme for types of settlement follows a similar evolutionary structure, progressive from isolated hamlets or farmstead to village and town" (Birch 2013: 2). *Semi nucleated* will be defined as a type of settlement configuration where the main residential site has a nucleated character, while the outlying parts have dispersal orientation. Hence, except Andal, all the settlement centers have a dispersed layout due to geomorphology, lineage homogeneity and scarce population, land use pattern, and indigenous definition of village.

The plethora of farmsteads, hamlets and villages grouped into a settlement center can be analyzed through a variety of settlement study approaches or techniques. The most popular approach to understand inter-village/inter-community interaction is the central place theory (CPT) that argues, "hexagonal framework in which the relationship of central places are such that they are equidistant from each other" (Haynes and Enders 1975: 357). This hexagonal model predicts the regional interaction among settlements at regional level operates within certain set of geographical and social parameters based on hypothetical six direction of interaction. This explanation does not apply to the understanding of dispersed settlement pattern of the Nabagade Valley due to the regional scale of analysis of CPT, and the topographic constraints among the settlement centers in the Nabagade Valley. This is precisely the same as James Scott's idea of

friction of terrain to describe the difficulty of relation imposed by rugged terrain among South East Asian societies (Scott 2009).

Recently, Paul Wallin and Helene Martinsson-Wallin proposed analytical model that help to study small scale societies. Their model appears to me as the localized version of the CPT. They defined the basic residential unit as a ward, and the residential units affiliated to it as "ward catchment'. They defined ward catchment as "constructed by drawing a circle of 200m radius using the principal structure in each ward as the center" (Wallin and Martinson Wallin 2007: 86). This arbitrary demarcation of dispersed settlements into ward and ward into village help us to organize the scattered settlements in a lower level of abstraction. Although this model was developed to assess prehistoric settlement pattern of interaction, it is still useful in contemporary setting to examine the patterns of inter-ward relation prevailing among small scale settlements. For this purpose I will take one of the seven settlement centers, Garadaf, as case example to discuss the dynamics of settlement distribution in the Nabagade Valley.

Garadaf is a settlement center composed of small wards scattered in the Garadaf Plain. The central location of Garadaf Plain can be referred as $14^{0}54^{1}181^{11}$ North and $039^{0}31^{1}866^{11}$ East with an elevation of 4320 feet. The plain is a confluence of two major tributaries (Forohima and Arbaba'e), and the main course of Nabagade stream (upper course of Koma'li) cuts across the plain. Due to riverine topographic nature of the Garadaf Plain, relatively broad banks, the presence of thick alluvial soil and the flush floods from the upland, the plain has suitable condition for agriculture. The plain extends 4km length and 1.5km width. In this plain, a total of thirteen villages ranging

from three families in Kukuhso to thirty families in Sahnsah are found, and the total number of families in this plain was during my fieldwork 112 families. And majority of the families have moved out of the villages. During my fieldwork only less than half of the total families were living in these villages, and this indicates high rate of valley to plateau migration in recent years.

The wards/villages in the Garadaf plain are of dispersed type and often 3-4 families are found in one location, and at a distance of 100-200m lies the next ward. This plain has unique social-ecological organization, where a hydraulic pattern and associated land use pattern dictates the distribution of settlements. Often homestead are constructed in hilltop; next to the farm the family owns (Fig 3, Plate 1). The cluster of families who live in the same location is not only a residential unit but also an adaptive strategy to draw corporate labor required to undergo successful irrigation and other livelihood activities. The families that dwell in the same location water from the same tributary, construct common defensive wall and canal, and dig the same cistern/well for drinking water. In certain occasions, the number of families that form a corporate unit ranges up to eight families. Due to the high requirement of labor in the spate irrigation and river diversion technique, the corporate labor is critical in order to undergo successful horticulture/intensive agriculture economy. As a consequence of the decisive role of the corporate labor, the farmland in the plain is not owned by individual family but by the cluster of households contributing to the collective labor, and the infrastructure of the unit becomes permanent ownership of these households, i.e. hereditary.

The type of houses in Garadaf Plain, unlike the other settlement center is dominated overwhelmingly by *nahsa* type of house. The predominant type of house in the other settlement centers is *agudo* (hut), but contrary to this general pattern in the valley, Garadaf villages are dominated by *nahsa*. But, the *nahsa* dwellings constructed in the Garadaf have structural difference from the *nahsa* constructed in the plateau. Two major structural differences illustrate the architectural variation. First *nahsa* in Garadaf has smaller size, often 4m x 5m, whereas the *nahsa* constructed in the plateau has 10m by 7m or bigger in the case of abatement (bi-*nahsa*). This could be associated with the landform differences and availability of flat land in both localities. The second difference of the *nahsa* in Garadaf and the plateau is on their variable porch. The *nahsa* in Garadaf have wider porch, which is used as sleeping space (*balbala*), due to the high air temperature and humidity inside the living room. The *nahsa* in the plateau on the other hand have narrow porch or no porch at all. Finally, the pen-*nahsa* (meant for animals) have open roof or roof made of linear arrangement of straw only, but the *nahsa* in the plateau have roof made of thick straw, bough and earth layer.

| | Village | Families | No. of Agricultural Plots | Perimeter of each plot | Watering Stream | Owner Clan |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Asa Absali Dage | 12 | 36 | 20m x 6m | Nabagade | Nare, Igila, |
| 2 | Saganto | 13 | 29 | 20m x 5m | Forohima/Nabagade | Ga'aso/Dasamo |
| 3 | Ambo | 15 | 24 | 20m x 5m | Forohima | Dasamo |
| 4 | Madhukuro | 16 | 23 | 19m x 6m | Nabagade | Feqat Harak |
| 5 | Ma'etarta | 18 | 9 | 20m x 5m | Forohima | Dasamo |
| 6 | IbahGibit | 8 | 40 | 30m x 5m | Arbaba'e/Nabagade | Feqat Harak |
| 7 | Forohima | 13 | 16 | 20m x 5m | Forohima | Ga'aso |

Table 4.1: Sample of villages in Garadaf settlement center with number of families and agricultural plots

One of the peculiar reasons for the architectural difference between Garadaf and other settlement centers in the valley is the subsistence activities carried out in these settlements. Villagers of Garadaf undergo rain-fed and irrigation cultivation along the banks of the river. The other settlements centers are principally pastoral with very little rain-fed home garden in the compound of each homestead. Table 4.1 summarizes the family, farmland and distribution of villages in seven villages of the Garadaf. A total of 95 homesteads dwell in these seven villages that I studied in detail. The average distribution of agricultural plot in Garadaf ranges between 2 and 3 farm lands per family, and the perimeter of each plot is either 20m x 6m or 20m x 5m. This size of arable land is functionally equivalent to the land allocated to families in the plateau, because in the plateau families get about double of the size of the plot than Garadaf but they cultivate once a year. In Garadaf the families/cluster of families cultivates twice a year, and this maximizes their produce and equalizes them with their plateau counterpart. Most of the

villages, as shown in the table, are owned by Minifere *kisho*, and the Ga'aso, Dasamo and Feqat Harak clans have their own distinct villages.

In sum, the overall analysis of the distribution of dispersed villages, lineage organization (affiliation), subsistence activities and labor organization highlights that the Garadaf settlement pattern shows major transformation and evolutionary trend. In the other settlement centers, villages are randomly scattered in the slopes, and hilltop, and concurrently households have autonomous land ownership. In Garadaf, however, villages are dispersed along the banks of the tributaries, and the pockets of settlements are linearly distributed profoundly on the principles of collective labor and farmland location. Finally, the architectural types found in Garadaf show certain evolutionary trend and intermediary character between the purely pastoral dwelling and agro-pastoral dwelling practiced in the plateau. Unlike Garadaf, in the other settlement centers, the homesteads commonly comprise human huts and pen huts types of dwellings. In Garadaf, the common kind of dwelling is *nahsa*, yet different from the *nahsa* constructed in the plateau. Hence, putting all these variables together, the Garadaf settlement pattern and socio-ecological organization sets a medial (intermediary) character between pastoral and agro-pastoral subsistence strategies.

This phase begins sometime after the cessation of lineage segmentation at the 9$^{th}$ generation of the clan. There was not an automatic switch between the 2$^{nd}$ and 3$^{rd}$ phases of the Feqat Harak, because it appears that there was a transitional period between both phases. Meaning, the valley to plateau expansion did not immediately begin after the end of lineage segmentation and village expansion in the valley. The

reason for dividing these two phases is due to their distinct social and ecological characteristics and historical process. The interphase between them ended when the Feqat Harak intensified their migration to Qohaito Plateau, and to form sedentary villages.

PLATE 1:

Settlement Pattern and distribution in valley and Plateau

Fig. 1: Rock shelter outcrop in Qohaito

Fig. 2: Agoh (infant animal room) in rock shelter

Fig. 3: Household and agriculture field in the Valley

Fig. 4: Dispersed homesteads in Qohaito (Mereba'e)

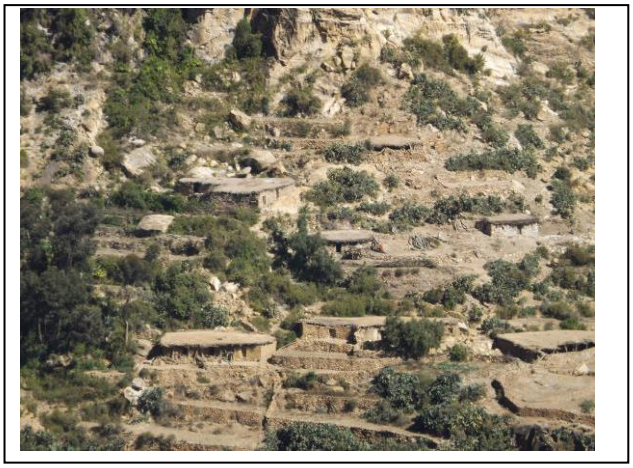


Fig. 5: Cliff dwelling and nucleated houses in Eshika

Fig. 6: Nucleated Settlement in the village of Wekeiro

## 4.3. Valley to Plateau Expansion

According to the oral history and settlement remains, the Feqat Harak sedentary village formation and expansion continue to rapidly co-occur in the valley parallel with the rapid lineage segmentations. These tightly interlocked processes ceased at the end of the second phase, as described above. Lineage segmentation ceased after the 9$^{th}$ generation, which is roughly estimated to the early decades of 1800s. Despite the cessation of lineage segmentation, however, the formation and spread of sedentary village continued. It was in the post-segmentation period that the Feqat Harak settlement expanded into new ecological zone - Qohaito Plateau. Since no lineage segmentation occurred during this phase, all the factors and causal forces driving the expansion of sedentary villages are non-lineage or non-kinship (at least majority of them). This is not to totally dismiss lineage as a factor in the process of expansion, but the role lineage segmentation played was limited. For instance, the two valley-plateau routes of expansion were determined by the lineage organization, where the two supra-clan segments followed independent route of expansion (diag. 4.1). Despite the significant incorporation of lineage organization in the process of valley to plateau expansion, majority of the critical factors leading to the expansion are non-lineage, non-kinship, parameters. And this section will demonstrate the multi-variate and complex nature of the valley to plateau expansion.

Ahmad Shum, son of *Shum* (chief) Dawd, claim that there were repetitive unsuccessful attempt in the early days of the Feqat Harak to establish a sedentary villages in Qohaito Plateau. According to him and other informants, the plateau was an uninhabited land with seasonal pastures and evergreen trees, such as juniper, favorable for seasonal

transhumance migration. The attempt was as early as the 5th generation, but due to continuous raid by the neighboring Tigrinya society, the Feqat Harak and other Saho lineage groups could not successfully establish permanent settlements in the plateau. However, although the Feqat Harak could not form permanent villages, they were frequently migrating in summer to the plateau, and used to settle in collective cattle camps and rock shelters. There are frequent outcrops of rock shelters (rarely caves) in the eastern and western slopes of the plateau, and my intensive archaeological survey in contemporary and prehistoric caves and rock shelters shows that some of the caves/rock shelters were occupied for several centuries. In one rock shelter found in Adi Alewti, an exposed stratigraphy contains 70cm thick *gadia* layer (floor plaster) with an in situ mat at 8cm depth. This thick *gedia* deposit with foliated layer indicates continuous cycle of occupation and abandonment. And the mat made from straw of palm trees indicate, from ethnographic analogy, that the floor was used as living or sleeping space for the inhabitants.

Oral tradition and traveler's account indicate that at the beginning of the 19th century, due to increasing inter-community interaction, the Saho communities' migration to Qohaito plateau became intensified. The environmental factors also became important especially the occurrence of frequent drought in the Horn of Africa. The last section of the previous chapter discusses in detail the evolution of new ecological and inter-community interaction at the beginning of the 19th century in Qohaito. The main reason that drove the emergence of new pattern of relation was the emergence of Tekonda'e and other principalities in the highland, which attracted their own counterpart lineage group at the edge of the plateau. Three identical inter-ethnic

attractions took place in Qohaito Plateau between Tigrinya and Saho ethnolinguistic groups. The interaction followed a course of bilateral form; Ga'aso sub tribe paired with Gramaten, Feqat Harak with Tekonda'e, and Asa Lesan with Aret. Each bilateral inter-community interaction was based on rental land kind of relationship, and accordingly the Saho clans paid lease to their respective Tigrinya partner. As a result, the Saho communities began to use the Qohaito Plateau for grazing. The bilateral relationship took effective economic exchange pattern that the Tigrinya depended for livestock and other dairy products on Saho, and the Saho in return relied for agricultural product; grain.

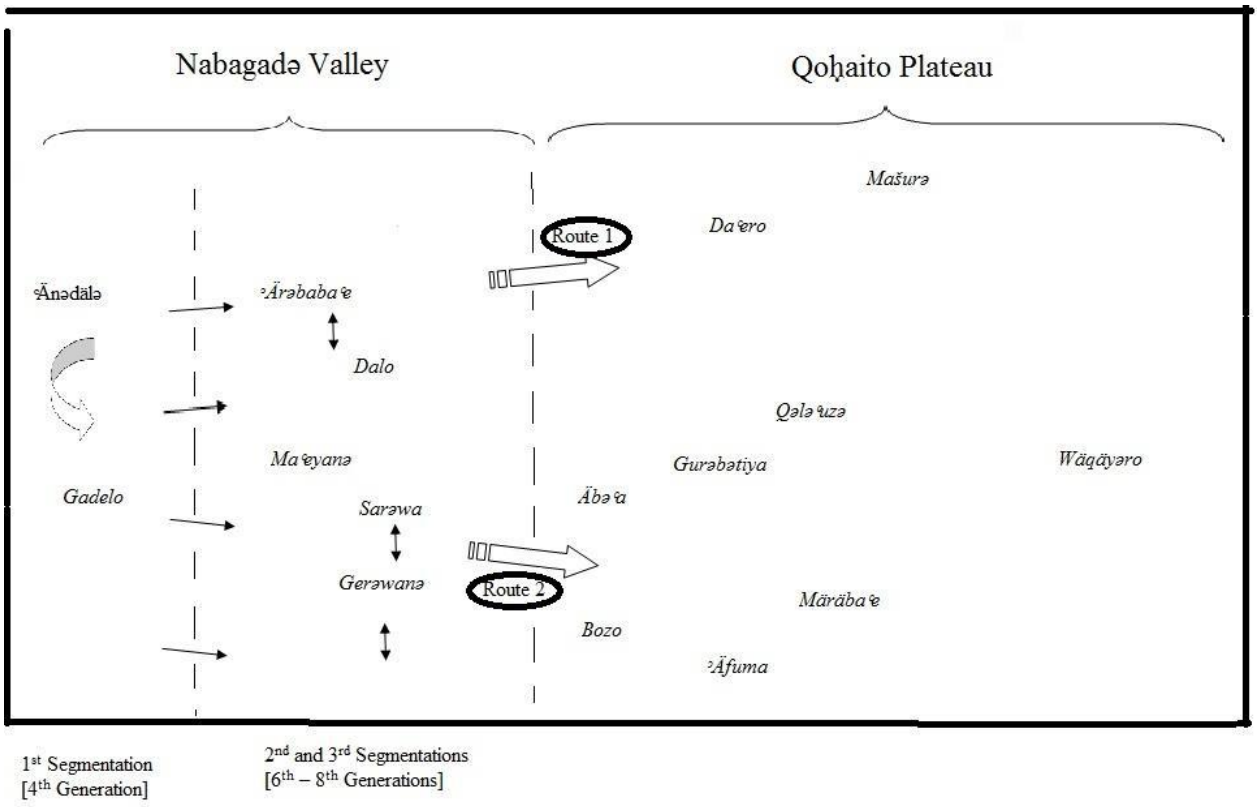



Diagram 4. 1: Routes of Valley to Plateau expansion

Some travelers described the mutual relation as ‘entente cordiale’ format, because of the equal benefit both sides gain from the exchange. The relation was reinforced by the environmental and climatic condition of the plateau and the valley. Both regions have variable topographic setting and swapping rainy seasons, and this conditions optimized the exchange pattern between the communities engaged in the bilateral relation. The rainy season of the highland ranges between June and September, and of the lowland and escarpment between November and January. This is an ideal set up for cattle migration and intensive cultivation, and enables to provide the necessary requirements for each seasonal subsistence activity. The profound impact of the environmental and topographic conditions in the unique set of one-to-one coded inter-community (ethnic) relation between Saho and Tigrinya communities is to be substantially felt in the massive environmental change that occurred at the end of the 19$^{th}$ century. The environmental change and disturbance in the rainfall pattern in this period resulted in systemic change and readjustment in the socionatural organization of these communities.

There is a perfect chronological match between the oral account and written documents confirming the co-occurrence of the formation of the first sedentary villages and the environmental disaster (severe drought) in the Horn of Africa. Ahmad Shum claims that the first settlers of *Enda* Abdela branch of the Feqat Harak in Qohaito were Ansara, On Kelil, Ali Qe and Ali Abubaker. These settlers lived five generations ago, and based on standard 25 year per generation, the time was around 1880s-1890s. This period matches the most devastating environmental disaster (drought) that shake the whole region, and historians agree that this drought imposed the highest environmental impact in the

modern history of the region. The four-year long continuous drought (1888-1892) across the Horn of Africa resulted in massive transformation in the socionatural organization of the peoples of the region.

It was in this historical context that rapid valley-plateau migration and formation of sedentary villages in the plateau took place. The four founders of the first sedentary village in the plateau settled in the village of Gurubtiya. Hence, Gurubtiya became the first sedentary village in Qohaito Plateau for the *Enda* Abdala branch of the Feqat Harak clan. Moreover, the formation of permanent settlements in Qohaito plateau benefited from the establishment of Italian colonial rule. A chief was appointed for the first time by the Italian colonial administration; named Shum Ahmad. The new chief built his residence in a place called Bozo located at the eastern edge of the plateau. During the reign of Shum Ahmad, Qadi Abdela was the representative of the *kisho* in the colonial administration. The function of the chief was to organize tax collection and oversee the legal and administrative issues; such as pasture, ritual and legal matters. After the death of Shum Ahmad, his son Omer was appointed by the British Military Administration (BMA) to the office, and continued the functions his father held. Generally speaking, there is little information among the contemporary inhabitants about Shum Ahmad and Shum Omar. During their reign, the popularity of Qadi Abdela, who introduced agriculture in the plateau, dominates the memory and appreciation of the villagers, and hence less is spoken about them in the oral tradition.

Starting from the late 19$^{th}$ century up to the first half of the 20$^{th}$ century was the initial and formative period of the expansion of sedentary villages in Qohaito Plateau by the

Feqat Harak. Soon after the formation of Gurubtiya as the first sedentary village, other villages began to flourish in the plateau. For two decades, since the 1890s, the first village and other seasonal camps were pastoral villages with access to new pasture in the plateau. There is no clear information from any kind of source, whether the first settlers were undergoing cultivation. But collecting wild fruit and honey was an important ingredient in the dietary supply of the people. In 1910s, however, the official introduction of cultivation accompanied by ceremony and ritual called *Ziyari Tena* was performed by Qadi Abdela. The ritual took place on June 12 Geez Calendar of unknown year (1911-1927), and this marked the beginning of agriculture and agrarian villages in Central Qohaito.

*Ziyari Tena* is the second landmark event in the memory of the Feqat Harak after the foundation of the clan, and the initiator of the ritual (Qadi Abdela) the second popular person after the apical ancestor. In the event, Qadi Abdela invited his friend *Degiat* Zahlay from the neighboring principality in Tekonda'e, and requested him to show his men how to plough. *Degiat* Zahlay brought fifty pairs of plough oxen and hundred men to Qohaito Plateau, and demonstrated plough fields to the Feqat Harak. The ceremony took place under a big oak tree near the contemporary village of Mereba'e. The introduction of agriculture played major role in the formation and consolidation of permanent villages in Qohaito Plateau, and systemic changes in the subsistence and social makeup of the Feqat Harak. Valley-Plateau migration increased with new villages founded across the Feqat Harak territory of the Qohaito.

Two routes of expansion (diag. 4.1) emerged in the process followed separately by the two supra-clan segments. Unlike the Feqat Harak villages in the valley characterized by the inter-spacing of villages, the newly formed villages in Qohaito Plateau became supra-clan exclusive. Route 1 of valley-plateau migration belonged to the *Enda* Sofi branch, and Daero and Mashur became the major villages circumvented by satellite hamlets and camps. Route 2 of migration was followed by *Enda* Abdela, and many villages were established by the members; Gurubitya, Ab'a, Bozo, Afuma, and Qluz (Table 4.2).

Four Feqat Harak villages were established in the plateau in the reign of Shum Ahmad and Shum Omar (1st and 2nd chiefs). The exact time when the villages were established is quite difficult to trace but based on genealogical account and oral history the approximate estimation would plot to late 19th century and early twentieth century. As discussed previously Ahmad Shum pointed out that the first settlers in the plateau were in Gurubtiya and the settlers practice transhumance pastoralism until *Ziyari Tena* was performed, marking the beginning of cultivation started.

Although we didn't see any new segmentation in the lineage groups, the settlement of the Feqat Harak took (even though not exclusive) lineage pattern. Members of the supra-clan segments began to congregate in certain location, which is why we see villages inhabited by members of one or two lineage groups (see table below). Some villages are homogenous in terms of lineage composition; Ab'a (Ishmael Boka), and Bozo and Afuma (Qadi Silan). Hence, we can conclude that although the formation of

sedentary villages in Qohaito Plateau was the result of complex factors, the actual village composition is significantly determined by the lineage affiliation.

| | **Village** | **Inhabitants (segments)** |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Gurubtiya | AbDawd, Qadi Silan, Qadi Mohammad |
| 2 | Ab'a | Ishma'el Boka, |
| 3 | Bozo | Qadi Silan |
| 4 | Afuma | Qadi Silan |
| 5 | Eshika | Dawd Gura, Ibrahim Msgun |
| 6 | Ql'uz | Ishma'el Boka, |

Table 4.2: lineage composition of *Enda* Abdela villages in the Plateau

The settlement pattern and the nature of village distribution in the plateau have important difference compared to the valley. In the valley, villages have dispersed orientation, except the semi-nucleated type of Andal. Village layout in Qohaito Plateau however have nucleated pattern (fig 5 and 6, plate 1) with farm land separating consecutive villages. Two types of cultivated fields exist in the plateau; home garden and fields outside the village. Hence due to the home garden, households have spacious compound, yet the homesteads are situated nearby; which gives the village semi-nucleated layout.

## 4.4. Dispersal of Settlement and aftermath

This phase, *dispersal and aftermath* of Qohaito villages, marked the turbulent period of the Feqat Harak and other lineage groups inhabiting Qohaito plateau as the consequence

of large scale war between the Ethiopian army and Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF). This phase occurred during the reign of the third chief, Shum Dawd, who was appointed around 1955 and served until Eritrean liberation in 1991. Shum Dawd's reign was marked by political unrest and fairly large scale war, which arguably terminated the smooth process of settlement expansion of the Feqat Harak in Qohaito Plateau. The political unrest caused by the beginning of Eritrean war of independence turned Qohaito Plateau into conventional war zone between ELF and Ethiopian monarchial throne. The war escalated at the end of 1960s, when Emperor Haile Selassie began to carry out indiscriminate military campaigns against ELF and the civilian population.

According to Ahmad Shum, the emperor issued an ultimatum to the local chiefs and elders of the clans dwelling in Qohaito Plateau ordering them to convince the ELF fighters to disarm; otherwise a collective punishment will be taken against the inhabitants of the plateau. The local chiefs and prominent elders held a meeting in a village called Aba'e to discuss the matter. After long discussion the participants agreed to send a delegation to ELF commanders operating in the area. The delegation was set up composed of eight representatives from Dasamo and Ga'aso, more than eight from Assaurta, and one from Feqat Harak. Shum Dawd represented the Feqat Harak, and his son Ahmad Shum accompanied him in the meeting.

In the meeting, ELF representative rejected the Emperor's demand, and the delegates returned unsuccessful, and on their way back to their villages, the delegates held a short meeting to finalize the message to the Ethiopian authorities. They agreed on three points; to inform the refusal of ELF, to testify the presence of multitude of ELF fighters

in the valley, and finally to fabricate a message saying that the ELF agreed a three-month cease fire. They deliberately forged the last message in order to get enough time to decide what to do with their settlement in the plateau. The people speculated that the Ethiopian army will conduct non-discriminatory shelling and military raid, and soon some families began to abandon their villages and moved down to the cliff and valley for safety (fig 5, plate 1). But many families still remained in their villages in the plateau, and became the victims of the military expedition.

Five violent military raids took place between 1968 and 1970 in Qohaito Plateau, and another in 1977 (Table 4.3). The fifth and the sixth (1977) led to the dispersal of the inhabitants of Qohaito. Majority of the people fled to the valley and escarpment, to western lowland (such places as Adi Ibrahim), to refugee camp in Sudan, and some resettled in towns or went into exile. Following the dispersal of Qohaito villages in 1970's, the Ethiopian army established a garrison until 1979. In 1979 however, the ELF and EPLF withdrew from the liberated towns to the northern hill and the military buffer zone shifted far north, and the military base of the Ethiopian army in Qohaito Plateau was dismantled. Soon a new administrative post was installed and militia was formed. Then people began to return to their villages again.

| Raid | Objective of the raid | Human Lose | Property Destruction |
|---|---|---|---|
| Early 1968 | To clear any suspicious position of the ELF | 2 (Sheikh Sofi and Sheikh Taha) | Livestock, Stalk and houses |
| August 1968 | To burn ripened cereal crop | 1 (Mohammed Sheikh Ali) | Ploughed field turned into ashes |
| November 1968 | Retaliation following an ambush by ELF fighters over Ethiopian army garrison | 1 (Bekita Ahmed) | Houses burnt, livestock looted |
| Early 1969 | To disconnect the supply line of the ELF afield and the Civilian | 1 (Mohammed Nur Ibrahim) | All livestock in the village of Saro were machine-gunned, granaries and houses burnt |
| 1970 | This was a high scale military operation aimed at crushing ELF and other faction's operational ability | More than forty individuals were killed (including Shifa Abdela and Halima Shum Ahmed | Total destruction of the villages and their subsequent abandonment, which led to the dispersal of the inhabitants |
| September 21, 1977 | As part of nationwide crackdown against ELF and EPLF positions and occupied cities | Many people died and in some instances entire family perished | Virtually nothing remained standing both human and material |

Table 4.3: Summary of the six military raids (atrocities) that took place in Qohaito Plateau

Shum Dawd's office was characterized by massive population displacement and instability. His negotiation efforts were crucial for the Feqat Harak and other lineage groups' return to Qohaito Plateau in the post-atrocity period. Due to his good relations with Ethiopian authorities, he was even ones imprisoned by ELF units suspected collaboration with Ethiopian administration, he was able to negotiate the mechanism for the return of the displaced villagers.

In 1979, after the dismantlement of the Ethiopian military base in Qohaito, the government installed new administrative system. Accordingly, Qohaito Plateau, its adjacent valleys and the plain was divided into four administrative units (*qebele*); namely Nasrele, May Werqi, Tsehay Berqi, and Mensura.

- ✓ **Nasrele**: encompasses parts of the Southern and central part of Qohaito Plateau. The chairman of this *qebele* was Shum Dawd.

- ✓ **Mensura**: covers the southern extreme of the Qohaito Plateau, in today's Igila, and the chairman was Abdela Ado, who served in police before his appointment into this position. Mensura was the biggest of these *qebele*, and the territory reached as far as the coastal village of Irafaile.

- ✓ **May Werqi**: covers today's Karibosa, a region located in the big valley north of Qohaito Plateau. Karibosa is located at the upper course of Hadas River. The chairman of this *qebele* was Hamad Se'ad.

- ✓ **Tsehay Berqi**: covers the northern part of Qohaito, and the chairman of this *qebele* was Hamad Musa.

After the installation of new administrative structure and appointment of administrators, Shum Dawd and other influential persons began to negotiate with the authorities about the return of the displaced families and to restore the ordinary livelihood. They

convinced the authorities to construct an IDP shelter in the plateau, where the scattered families can live for short time prior to their return to the abandoned villages. Two blocks of bungalows each having ten rooms was constructed, and the government provided food for the dwellers. The shelter accommodated twenty families at a time, and quickly the residents began to return to their villages. This way, the shelter used as a kind of make shift camp for the returnee, and in the next rainy season, all the displaced families evacuated the shelter.

After the evacuation of the displaced families from the shelter, other families began to construct residence near the shelter, and the shelter became new village called Mereba'e. Haj Suleiman, the first non-refugee settler of Mereba'e, constructed his residence next to the shelter, and gradually other families followed him. Omer Gango, Saleh Ahmad, Saleh Osman, Ahmad Ibrahim, and Saleh Abdela and others gradually constructed their homestead in Mereba'e. The gradual growth of the Mereba'e and the nearby village called Afuma ended in 1992 when the newly established National Museum of Eritrea banned any future construction of homestead in these villages due to their proximity to the archaeological properties.

The last phase in the expansion of Feqat Harak village in central Qohaito took place in the post-independence period. In 1994, following the new land proclamation by the state, villages were allowed to distribute land to the descendants throughout the country both for residence and agriculture/pasture. The Feqat Harak designated the villages of Wekeiro for new residence for the descendants of *Enda* Abdela supra-clan, and the village of Mashur for the *Enda* Sofi supra-clan. These two villages became the last in

the long process of valley to plateau settlement expansion of sedentary villages of the Feqat Harak.

# Chapter Five

## *Architectural Diversity of Feqat Harak across the Valley and Plateau*

Chapter Five continues the second dimension of settlement study initiated in Chapter Four, and deals with the architectural diversity in the context of the historical process of settlement formation and expansion. This will comparatively cross examine the types and forms of dwellings built by the inhabitants, and highlight the embedded social and ecological meaning associated with the diversity of dwelling types. Following Bramfiel (1992), Taomia noted, "changes in societies at large are rooted in changes in the organizational composition and character of the households that provide the goods and services to support the society" (Taomina 2000: 139). This argument claims that change in homestead type, as the smallest building block of the community, illustrates the overall change occurring in the society on various fronts. Meaning, the overall change taking place in a society is the aggregate effect of changes that occurred in the household. Domestic architecture and village layout in their own way reflect all the organizational and adaptive changes that occurred at the household. To prove this thesis this research will examine the domestic architecture or dwelling variability practices by the Feqat Harak in *Nabagade* Valley and Qohaito Plateau. The distribution and morphological attributes of the four major architectural types will be discussed in detail in this chapter to show the continuity and evolutionary aspects of the communities.

Glowacki and Vogeikoff-Brogan (2011) identified eight separate approaches for the study of domestic architecture. Of all the approaches listed by them the industrial (production) approach to the study of domestic architecture will be applied in this

research. This approach, inclined to the productivity part of house architecture, views domestic architecture as a response to the socio-environmental conditions of the area to ensure the fulfillment of the subsistence needs of the family. Steponaitis assumed mathematically that "the size of any settlement is directly related to the amount of food it has available" (Steponaitis 1981: 325). Although not at face value, the basic premises of the assumption is well taken, where a residential area or settlement is directly proportional to the economic produce or the number of inhabitants. This settlement size-amount of food correlation is only suitably applicable in unstratified societies, because in ranked societies the central locations store far more than the actual producers in the periphery, and thus the correlation might mislead. In the case of Feqat Harak, settlements and the overall social makeup of the people are founded on egalitarian relationship, and hence settlement size-subsistence base ratio can be a good indicator. This chapter however not only focuses on the economic and production aspect of dwelling type or village plan, but will rather transcend to examine the corollary changes related to sedentism, social composition, subsistence diversity, rise of complexity, and new forms of inter-community interaction. Special focus will be given to the nature of distribution, technological and construction aspects and the social character of the dwellers.

The emergence of complex relationship and socio-economic transformation will be viewed in light to the changes in dwelling types that occurred in the last four hundred years history of the Feqat Harak clan. Several thematic studies can be conducted in architectural study; gender and domestic space, activity areas and productivity, symbolic expression, floor plan (morphological) analysis, and technology and

construction materials. All approaches possess equal relevance in their respective context, and it depends on the specific needs of a research to apply a particular approach.

This section will carry out twofold exploration; first the technological and construction continuity of the Feqat Harak dwelling across space and time. Second, comparison of the homestead layout of the various dwelling types, and the way these dwelling types illustrate the socio-economic and subsistence transformation of the inhabitants. The first part of the inquiry focuses the construction types of the dwelling or the styles of dwelling; shape, size and floor plan of the dwelling types. Pierre Lemonnier (2005) describe style as "style includes the functionally equivalent means to reach the same end, a definition so broad that we could imagine style to exist in any variation of material culture". Hence, the stylistic difference among the dwelling forms of the Feqat Harak, and their technological and structural variation will be carefully examined. Moreover, the technological and functional continuity of these dwelling, and their distribution across the valley and the plateau will be analyzed.

The second part of the architectural study examines the domestic space organization of each dwelling type and their associated activity areas used by the inhabitants. The internal division of the compound comprises the kinds of activities carries out in each section of the compound. The dissertation will discuss the spatial divisions of the compound to illustrate the specific functions of each spatial sub unit, and the cumulative of these activities. This discussion follows the household analysis, which is becoming popular approach in anthropology and archaeology. Household and household

architecture are defined along several lines. "A group of individual bound by some notion of kinship and shared identity who cooperate in the production and reproduction necessary for survival … Are social units that structure common behavior but are also adaptable and can be reconstituted to meet the goals of their members (Rapoport 1969); and they serve as coordinated political actors that strategically negotiate their group's position within a social hierarchy (Bouser and Patton 2004)" (Carballo 2011:1 34). The household study applied in this chapter refers to the subsistence and social composition of the homestead, and how these parameters are inscribed in the structural and functional design of the dwelling.

The Feqat Harak build four types of dwelling that are distributed in variable proportion in the Nabagade Valley and Qohaito Plateau. The distributional chart of these architectural types shows that some types are exclusively found in the valley or plateau, and others coexist in both regions. The classification (taxonomy) of the dwelling types in this research is based on the architectural forms, shapes, floor design (plan), construction material and roof shape and type. Based on these criteria, four dwelling types are identified, namely *galba* (cave/rock shelter), *agudo* (hut), *nahsa* and *mereba'e* (bungalow). Each category of dwelling has its own internal sub type, if examined under detailed morphological attribute. The scope of the research, however, is limited to the comparative study of these broad dwelling categories.

Before describing the four types of dwelling in detail, let us look some of the general factors that determine the distribution of these dwelling types in the valley and plateau. The geomorphological characteristic of the area play decisive role in the inhabitants'

choice of a particular dwelling type. Cave dwelling is the prime example in this regard. The highly metamorphosed rock type of the Qohaito Plateau and adjacent escarpment hosts frequent outcrop of rock shelters, which renders easy access for the inhabitants to occupy them on seasonal basis. Secondly, the altitudinal variation between the valley and plateau, and the resultant climatic difference, especially air temperature and humidity, affect the choice between *nahsa* and hut. The main difference between these dwelling types is the roof. *Nahsa* has a thick flat roof composed of alternate layers of mud, grass and bough, and due to this heat effectiveness (ability to preserve heat), it is highly preferred in the plateau. *Agudo* on the other hand has conical roof made of sequence of aligned wattle and bough, sometimes covered with thatched grass and sometimes not. And due to the better ventilation and semi-open roof, huts are the predominant types of dwelling found in the valley. In some cases, in the valley however the families co-practice both kinds of dwelling for different specialized purposes.

The final factor in the construction of specific dwelling type is related to the social makeup (composition) of the dwellers. This factor is best reflected in the emergence of *mereba'e* dwelling, which is a new post-colonial architecture. Its distribution is limited to two villages, Wekeiro and Mashur, and these villages are exclusively *mereba'e* villages. The first three types of dwellings are suitable for all kinds of families, nuclear, extended and joint, while *mereba'e* is only suitable for nuclear family. Thus, this non-traditional type of dwelling indicates the emergence of new social organization based on nuclear family, and the co-evolution of new non-agro-pastoral subsistence pattern. About 35 out of 44 families that dwell in the village are migrant workers in the Gulf States, and the remaining nine are engaged in non-agropastoral income generation

activities such as retail shop, public servants (administration, healthcare and teachers), and semi-skilled labor (especially construction). Thus the four types of dwelling are deeply interconnected with the social, subsistence and topographic features of the clan.

## 5.1. Dwelling Type 1: *Galba* (Cave)

*Galba* literally means cave in Saho language, and Qohaito Plateau especially the upper part of the eastern escarpment and western slope are full of rock shelters. There are two major clusters of rock shelters in central Qohaito occupied by the Feqat Harak. The first cluster is Adi Alewti located at the eastern brim of the plateau, and the on the western slope is found the Digdigta cluster. Adi Alewti and Digdigta clusters have several individual rock shelters, and often these rock shelters have concavo-convex geometry. The construction type of a rock shelter dwelling requires simple modification of the natural form of the rock shelters. A defensive wall is constructed at the front (mouth) of the rock shelter, and has semi-circular 1 to 1.2 m height with broad base wall that shrinks upward. No mortar or any other plastering is used in the construction of the wall, and simple undressed pebbles and boulder stones are used for building the wall (fig. 1, plate 2). In addition to the defensive wall, the internal space of the rock shelter is divided by compartment wall, relatively thinner and shorter than the defensive wall. The internal wall divides the space of the rock shelter into several functional rooms (diag. 4.2). Some rock shelters have upper cover by horizontally aligned bough that extends from the upper surface of the defensive wall to the roof. The floor of the rock shelter is covered with *gedia*, a plaster/polish made from dung and clay, if the room is meant for

human occupation, but not for the pen. *Gedia* is meant to flatten (soften) the surface of the living floor for convenient human use.

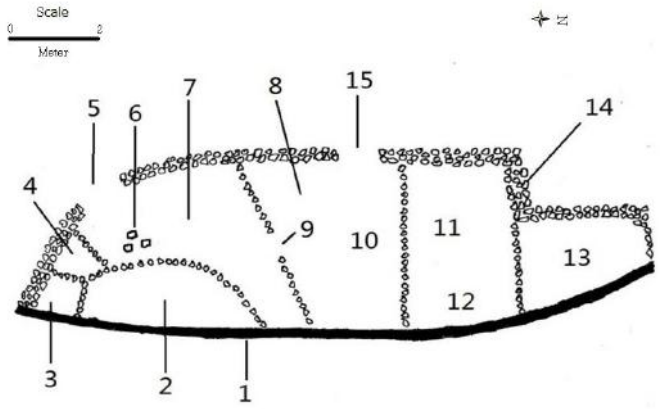
Depending on the social composition of the occupants, duration of occupation, number and type of animal population, the internal floor of the rock shelter is functionally divided into number of rooms. Rock shelters occupied by individuals having homogenous social status and for short duration usually constitute two rooms each for human and animal inhabitants; the living floor and pen. The fundamental principle of the space specialization in rock shelter dwelling is the diversity of the occupants. If the animal population is diverse, in terms of age, species and quantity, the pen section is divided into proportional rooms. Similarly, the social heterogeneity of the human dwellers defines the functional and symbolic division (compartments) of the living floor of the rock shelter. In this respect, the rock shelter occupied by individual (temporary camp), corporate groups (non-kin ephemeral association), nuclear and extended families has different domestic space organization and number of rooms.

The highest diversity (variability) of domestic space is exhibited in rock shelters occupied by extended family and with different classes of animals (age and species). This type of rock shelter has the maximum number of specialized rooms meant to house each class of animal and human dwellers. The lowest form of space diversity is seen in rock shelters inhabited by homogenous social groups with single species and type of animal, and often short term occupation. Such rock shelter has only one room for animals and humans each.

The internal divisions (rooms) of the living floor of a rock shelter are *goho, mekado, misklih, balbala* and kitchen, and in some cases a rock shelter might have a duplicate of either rooms depending on the number (size) of the individuals and the specific needs of the occupants. *Goho* and *mekado* are the two main living rooms segregated on gender lines. *Goho* is room reserved for women members of the family, and is usually located at the inner most of the living floor. *Mekado* on the other hand is a room for men dwellers and mostly located at the frontal (exterior) part of the rock shelter next to the main entrance. *Misklih*, meaning hearth, is a tri-stone arranged in circular pattern to form semi-enclosed oven. Each living room, *goho* and *mekado*, and the kitchen have their own *misklih*. The number and precise location of *misklih* indicate the functionally variability and specialized activity area of the rock shelter. Depending on the location within the living floor, the *misklih* has variable functions. Kitchen *misklih* is usually made of boulder (big size stone), and is used for cooking. *Goho misklih* has small pit underneath and is often used for warming the dwellers and for coffee making. The small pit is used to place as pedestrian for the coffee pot that has spherical base. *Mekado misklih* is usually made by small pebble stone, and has only one function; warming the room.

Finally, *balbala* is the sleeping area of the rock shelter, and the number of *balbala* approximately indicates the number of individual inhabitants of the rock shelter. *Balbala* is located inside the living floor in case of family occupation of the rock shelter, but if the rock shelter is occupied by either corporate group or shepherds, the *balbala* is located outside the living floor of the rock shelter, either in front of the rock shelter or adjacent to it. Most of the time *balbala* is constructed per person or per two persons.

Finally, the kitchen is located either at the *goho* or the front yard of the rock shelter, and the main indicator of the kitchen is the boulder hearth with thick ash layer inside it. Two main foods are prepared in the hearth; *dagha* (porridge) and *brkuta* (spherical bread). The spherical bread and heating milk can also be done in in the *misklih* located in *goho*, but the porridge needs to be cooked in the kitchen *misklih*. Because, porridge is prepared in large cooking vessel that can only be fixed in the kitchen *misklih*.




Legend

1. inner wall of rock shelter, 2 *maḵado*, 3 and 4 *ʾägoḥə*, 5, entrance one, 6 naḥəsa, 7 *maḵado*, 8 living room one, 9 internal door, 10 *goḥo*, 11 *ʾäburə* one, 12 fresh marks of urine, 13 *ʾäburə* two, 14 frontal wall, and 15 entrance two

Diagram 5.1: Floor plan of rock shelter dwelling in Digdigta

The pen has functional sub divisions; *agoh* and *abur*, and like the living floor, the pen can have more than one *agoh* and/or *abur* (diag. 4.2). *Agoh* and *abur* are the rooms for adult and infant animals respectively. Both rooms are often located distant to each other. Diagram 4.2 shows the floor plan of one rock shelter in Digdigta, and in that diagram the rock shelter has two *agoh*s and *abur*s (two sets spatial unit). This indicates that the dwellers had two different animals; combination of either goat, sheep, camel or cattle. The main structural difference between the pen and living floor is the presence of entrance, hearth, *gedia* and sometimes roof made from straw and bough. The living

floor has at least one entrance of about 1m wide, and the floor is polished with *gedia* daub (made from mixture of clay and dung). None of these features exist in the pen, although rarely roof made from bough might cover the room; a feature absent in the living floor.

In conclusion, cave and rock shelter occupation render simple dwelling type for the Feqat Harak and other clans. The simplicity of rock shelter occupation is manifested by the little construction materials required to modify the rock shelter. Moreover, the room, human and animal, are often open air shelters without roof or ceiling, and this structure resembles with living under trees or open shelters. Despite the structural simplicity of the rock shelter occupation, the social makeup of the dwellers is well articulated or imprinted in the domestic space of the shelter. The functional division of the living floor adequately reflects the social composition, animal diversity and other social characteristics of the dwellers. And, thus a general synthesis can be constructed that the spatial organization of the rock shelter laid the fundamental spatial code of the people, which significantly continued in the latter types of dwelling.

PLATE 2:

Architectural Types among the Feqat Harak

Fig. 1: Living floor of Rock shelter dwelling

Fig. 2: Animal hut in Nabagade Valley (Sebulale village)

Fig. 3: Residential hut (human use) Plate

Fig. 4: Hut extension in *nahsa* (Subiraso Village)

Fig. 5: Residential *nahsa* with abur extension (Mereba'e)

Fig. 6: *Mereba'e* (bungalow) in Wekeiro village

## 5.2. Dwelling Type 2: *Agudo*

*Agudo* (hut), the second type of dwelling, is a single non-contiguous circular type of dwelling made from bough, straw and thatched grass. This kind of architecture is common in the valley and often the typical kind of hut is absent in the plateau. Occasionally, *agudo*-like extension room is constructed next to *nahsa* dwelling in the highland (fig 4, plate 2). Meaning, the practice of *agudo* is limited to the valley, and there is no single proper *agudo* in the plateau. The construction of *agudo* is fairly simple but requires more raw material, time and labor compared to the rock shelter. *Agudo* is more adaptive with mobile life ways because its small size makes it simple to construct anywhere, and is easy to dismantle and reconstruct from and to any location. Similarly, the construction raw materials (wood, thatched grass and household material culture) are comparatively easy to travel with pack animals in any kind of terrain.

Two construction techniques with slight difference are practiced by the people. The first technique of construction is the vertical arrangement of bough inserted partly to the ground at shallow (20 to 40m) depth. The woods are vertically erected in circular orientation with an average diameter of 5 to 6 meters. The woods are placed at an interval of 15cm (average) along the circumference of the area. The wattle has about 2.5m height above the surface. After the placement of the bough vertically, the straws are horizontally placed by tying to the bough at the intersection to make the skeleton of the hut. Following the construction of the skeleton, the *agudo* is covered by thatched grass. Sometime, instead of thatched grass, the bough is placed at close interval, and the thatched grass is omitted, especially for animal hut. The roof has conical shape, and

sometimes is covered with thatched grass. The roof boughs radiate from the upper end of the side wall, and merge at the center of the *agudo*. The central part of the roof (crown) is left open for ventilation purpose due to high humidity and air temperature.

The second construction type of *agudo* is by the combination of stone wall and thatched grass roof. In this type, the side wall made from bough and straw is replaced by stone wall (fig. 3, plate 2), and the wall does not have any plastering material (mud or any other). The valley has frequent abundance of slate type of stone with flat surface, and this makes the construction of stone *agudo* very easy. The other architectural characteristics of this type of *agudo* are the same with the former type. The circular plan form is however maintained in both types of *agudo*. In most cases, if the dwelling is made of stone, the shape tends to be rectangular or square. But in the case of *agudo*, despite stonewall the shape remains constantly circular. This implies that the circular plan form is the traditional architectural type of the people.

The construction techniques of *agudo* and rock shelter dwelling have similarities and continuity of technology. First the construction materials used for modifying rock shelter and building *agudo* are the same especially the seccond type of *agudo* (most common one); stone wall and bough (roof). The frontal wall of rock shelter and side wall of stone *agudo* are precisely the same. The walls have 1 to 1.2m high wall, and the roof radiates from the top of the side wall.

A hut compound comprises several functionally specific huts designed for different classes of human and animal dwellers. Sometimes, the homestead might have dwelling

other than *agudo* (always *nahsa*). The huts, residential and pen, are scattered inside the premise of the unfenced compound. A compound usually have two or more residential huts, separated as *goho* and *mekado*, if the family has a *nahsa*, both the *goho* and *mekado* form two sections of the room. The pen depending on the number and type of animals, the homestead has one to multiple rooms. *Agoh* and *abur* however are the principal spatial divisions of homestead, and each of them have a small opening called *malho*. The purpose of *malho* is to pipe the urine from inside the room outward.

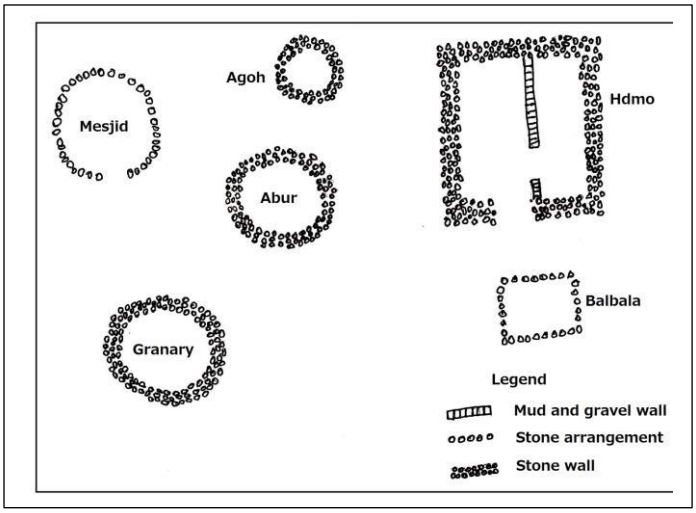



Diagram 5.2: *Agudo* compound in Nabagade Valley

Rock shelter and hut have significant variation in their domestic space organization; the rooms and activity areas of the former are concentrated in the same location, while in the latter dispersed in the unfenced compound. Second peculiar difference between rock shelter and hut dwelling observed on their variable spatial organization is related to the gender separated sections. The living floor of a rock shelter has well demarcated *goho* and *mekado,* feminine and masculine sections respectively, while the gender motivated spatial differences is less pronounced in the case of *agudo*. Sometimes there are separate huts meant for opposite sexes, and in other cases men sleep outside and women inside

the hut, still in other cases all live together in the same hut. Hence, comparatively speaking the rock shelter has far better and well-articulated spatial division for men and women.

Other structural difference of rock shelter and *agudo* emanates from the intra-variability of spatial layout derived from the functional diversity of each dwelling type. Rock shelter has several kinds of layout created as the result of variation in the function of rock shelters. Rock shelter are used for family dwelling, seasonal shelter, temporary (short duration), granary or else cache, and rarely burial (Adi Alewti and Digdigta). *Agudo* on the other hand has fixed geometrical outline and fairly constant utility pattern (use), which is to house animals and humans seasonally. Similarly, the social composition of the dwellers also shows significant differences. *Agudo*s are occupied only by pastoral family, while the rock shelter can be occupied by shepherds (cattle camp), non-kin corporate group or all kinds of family. Thus, *galba* has flexible architectural forms compared to *agudo,* which has almost uniform outline and fixed pattern of uses (utility).

Despite the difference, the general spatial outline of both dwelling types indicates that the primary subsistence activity of the dwellers is highly associated with animal husbandry (pastoralism). The general principle of spatial layout is specialized to accommodate various classes of animals and socially stratified individuals (in terms of social status rather than rank). The basic framework of the domestic space in both architectures is designed by a set of architecture units composed of *agoh, abur, goho* and *makado*. Depending on the size of herd and social makeup of the dwellers, a

homestead might have one or more sets of these architectural units. The other structural similarity of these architectures is, except in few localities, the absence of home garden meant for the horticulture.

## 5.3. Dwelling Type 3: *Nahsa*

*Nahsa* represents the rectangular two roomed or multiple roomed dwelling with flat roof made by alternate layers of bough, straw and earth. Twelve to sixteen pillars are erected in rectangular or square plan, at 3-4 meter interval, to carry the overlaid heavy roof structure. The skeleton of *nahsa* is constructed by a square of these four pillars, considered as the basic unit in the process of construction. From this initial square continues the construction by adding further squares to both x and y axes. Usually one axis has more square units in the serial construction process, which ultimately give the overall layout of the *nahsa* a rectangle.

The size of *nahsa* varies according to the number of pillar it is made from, and the nature of family determines the size of the *nahsa*. For instance, a nuclear family constituted by senior couples may require smaller size *nahsa*, while extended family often requires a bigger one proportional to the family size. In some cases, joint family resides in two contiguous *nahsa*s built adjacent to each other or *bi-nahsa*[17], as the case is with my host family – Haj Suleiman Omer. Haj Suleiman Omer and Abdela Omer are brothers who live in the bi-*nahsa* located in the same compound (diag. 5.2). Another situation that requires an extension of *nahsa* is in the case of wedding, when an adult

[17] Bi-*nahsa* in my context is when two complete Nahsa existing in a single household, and identification either adjacent to each other or separated by small strip of land.

male member of the family marries, he might reside the initial post marital with his parental family as joint family. Thus the family constructs new *nahsa* next to the existing one.

A cautionary note is necessary to bear in mind that not all *nahsa*s constructed in Qohaito and other regions of the country constitute a single or monotype *nahsa*. Despite the basic unit of construction of *nahsa* formed by the erection of four pillars, the complete shape of *nahsa* varies due to varying extension along the x and y axes of the dwelling. For instance, *nahsa* in the village of Mereba'e possess very different character than those found in the village of Subiraso, in which the earlier has no porch in the frontal side while the later has a wide bracket. Other difference also arose from the overall shape of the *nahsa* in that in some cases *nahsa* has broader breadth, while in other cases the opposite and this depends on the terrain where the *nahsa* is constructed. In sloppy area the gradation prevents elongation, and hence the *nahsa* became wide rather than long. But in most conditions *nahsa* has long axis and narrow width.

Comparison of *nahsa* in the context of the diversity of dwelling types in the Feqat Harak clan villages highlights crucial element of complexity in the process of construction, which might indicate collateral socio-economic complexity. *Galba* and *agudo* represent a dispersed mode of settlement pattern where each household is separated from each other by open land. For *galba*, it is quite obvious because the dwelling is fundamentally determined by the natural occurrence of the rock shelters, but in the case of *agudo* needs closer examination. In the first place *agoh, abur, goho* and *makado* are constructed separately to each, and secondly a household is separated from

each household by extensive land. In the case of *nahsa* however all rooms are built together around the main *nahsa* in a contiguous manner.

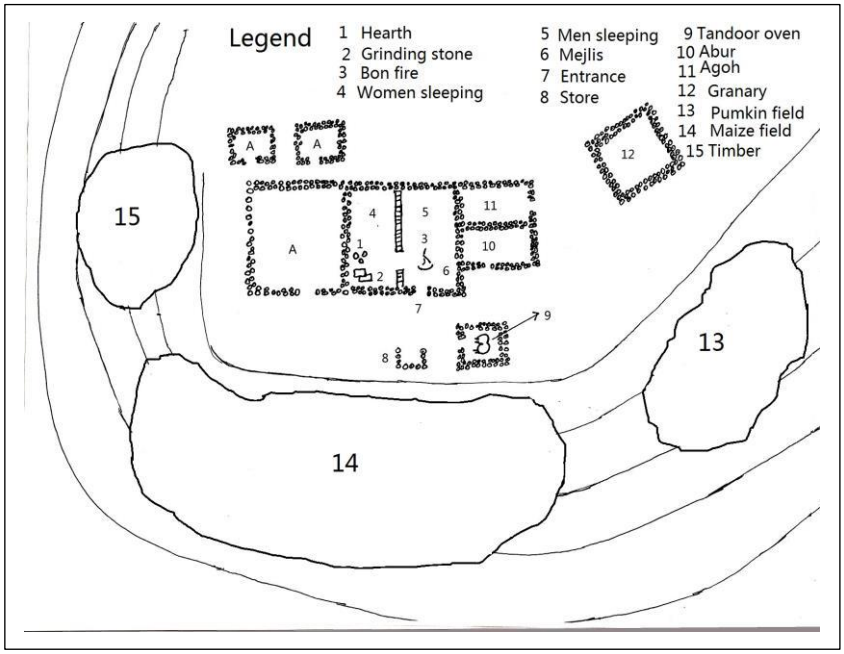



Diagram 5.3: *Nahsa* homestead in the village of Meraba'e

The complicated process of constructing *nahsa* is related to the permanence of the dwelling. Unlike the previous two dwelling types, *nahsa* is the first sedentary type of architecture among the Feqat Harak. The transition from the first two types to *nahsa* is accompanied by massive socio-economic transformation. Meaning, the introduction of *nahsa* as a traditional architecture should be understood in a broad historical context. If we look at the distribution of *nahsa* in the Feqat Harak clan territory, there are few *nahsa*s in the valley (limited to some villages) but predominant in the plateau. In the Qohaito Plateau, the only house form is, except in the villages of Mashur and Wekeiro, is *nahsa*. In the valley however the construction of *nahsa* is too rare and limited to some

particular localities located at river banks. In the village of Andal cut of 26 homesteads only 5 are *nahsa*, while the rest dwellings are *agudo* plan form.

Some of the driving factors that significantly contributed to the transition from *galba* and *agudo* to *nahsa* dwelling include; ecological, subsistence and inter-community interaction along the border zone. Ecologically, the valley and plateau has significantly different climatic and topographic setting/characteristics, which determine the livelihood of the inhabitants and the material culture assemblage. Although *nahsa* is found in both the valley and the plateau, the crucial aspect that needs to be explored is related to the proportion of distribution in both regions. In the valley homestead are built environment predominantly *agudo* type with few *nahsa*. In the plateau however sedentary villages were entirely, until 1977, composed of *nahsa* only. And this total dominance of *nahsa* dwelling in the plateau is the result of cool air temperature and low humidity conditions. The thick roof type of *nahsa* results in the high heat effectiveness, ability to preserve heat, and makes it desirable in the plateau. *Agudo* on the other hand has better adaptability in hot and humid areas, and the highland, quasi open wall and crown part of the building are designed to release heat from the room. Hence, the ecological projection of both regions is well represented in the architectural forms of *agudo* and *nahsa*.

Massive change in the subsistence activity, from pastoralism to agro-pastoralism, is the second factor in the introduction of *nahsa* among the people. The distribution of *nahsa* in the valley and plateau, and the layout of the compound depict the correlation adequately. In the valley, the distribution of *nahsa* is highly concentrated along the

banks of the main stream, especially in Garadaf plain, where spate irrigation is practiced. In areas located away from the river banks, in the valley, homesteads are mostly made of *agudo.* Similarly, *nahsa* is the only traditional architecture practiced in the plateau, where cultivation is a key component in the subsistence activities of the people. Moreover, the geometrical layout of *nahsa* compound manifests the tight connection between *agudo* and *nahsa* architecture. Every *nahsa* homestead has a home garden used for cultivating various kinds of crops. The size of *nahsa* compound varies primarily due to the size of the home garden, and since there is enough space between consecutive *nahsa*s, any household can expand their garden when necessary.

PLATE 3:

*Nahsa* and home garden in the Valley and Plateau

Fig. 1: Abandoned *nahsa* and garden in Sabulale Village

Fig. 2: Abandoned *nahsa* and garden in Andal

Fig. 3: *Nahsa* and garden in Gurubtiya Village

Fig. 4: *Nahsa* and garden in Mereba'e Village

The last factor in the transition to *nahsa* is related to the inter-community interaction that prevailed at the border between Saho and Tigrinya speaking communities around Tekonda'e. *Nahsa* was, and still is, the traditional dwelling in the highland among Tigrinya for several centuries prior to the 19th century. Countless ethnological descriptions and travelers account written in the 15th and 16th centuries confirm that *nahsa* was the traditional dwelling in the highland, in contrast to hut dwelling practiced

by pastoralists in the lowland. The increasingly intensified inter-ethnic relationship between the border communities in Qohaito gave way to the exchange of customs and habits among these communities. The simultaneous diffusion of cultivation economy and *nahsa* dwelling to the Feqat Harak in Qohaito Plateau is thus highly attributed to the cultural exchange with the neighboring Tigrinya communities.

Like the construction technique, the domestic space division of *nahsa* shows continuity with the two previous dwelling types, and also display major spatial change as well. Meaning, *agoh, abur, goho, mekado, misklih* and *balbala* continued as part of the internal division of the dwelling. The new technological and functional attributes associated with the co-emergence of cultivation economy and *nahsa* dwelling led to the emergence (evolution) of new functional spaces in the dwelling. The new functional spaces and associated material culture are the home garden (horticultural field), *Qofo* (storage bin), coop and *gesa* (tandoori oven).

- ✓ *Home garden*: by far, the home garden that encircles the *nahsa* is the most unique and major spatial evolution in the transition to the *nahsa* dwelling. Although *nahsa* was/is the predominant dwelling in the entire regions of the highland, there is never a case of home garden that makes an integral part of the compound. In the Feqat Harak and other clans village in Qohaito plateau however, a family owns a private horticulture field inside their homestead (compound). This one of the most remarkable spatial and architectural evolution among the clan. The garden, usually terraced into longitudinal concentric rings (diag. 5.3 and Plate 3), is used to cultivate various subsistence and cash crops;

maize, fig, eucalyptus, pumpkin … etc. The fig tree that encircles the homestead has many functions; to enclose the premise of the compound and to protect from wild animals attack; the fig leaf is used as fodder during winter and spring; the fig fruit supplies the family with additional food in summer and sometimes source of income by selling the fruit in the nearby town.

- ✓ *Coop*: *nahsa* dwelling consists of separate cage for chicken; in addition to the ovicarpids houses (*agoh* and *abur*). The coop is constructed in two ways; the first is by constructing a box by wood or iron sheets, where the internal chamber is divided horizontally into several levels (chests). The other way of coop construction is by tying bunch of sticks (rods) in horizontal fashion to make a platform of about 2m by 2m perimeter. This wooden structure is then suspended by tying along the four corners with the ceiling, and then to place the chickens.

- ✓ *Gesa*: *gesa* is a type of hearth made either by three boulder stones or in the form of tandoori oven. In the case of boulder stone *gesa*, a disc shaped metal is placed on top of the stones to bake thin circular bread called *kicha*. It can also be used to cook cuisines and heat water or milk by placing the cooking vessel on top of the boulders. Thus the boulder *gesa* has multiple functions compared to the tandoori oven. The tandoori oven has circular clay wall that encloses the fire chamber, and is covered on top by sun dried ceramic lead. The upper surface of the ceramic lead is where *injera*, flat and soft bread, is baked. The emergence of *gesa* diversified the domestic activities carried out in *nahsa* dwelling, and

significantly confirm the sedentary nature the inhabitants (presence of immovable and fragile material cultures).

- ✓ *Qofo* (storage bin): is large sun dried pottery storage constructed at the separating wall between *goho* and *mekado* rooms. *Qofo* is immovable storage for grains with a pointed base yet broad mouth with a small hole/opening near the base used to withdraw grain. *Qofo* is one of the diagnostic artifacts associated with sedentary agricultural societies who store grains for yearly consumption.

In conclusion, the introduction of *nahsa* along with the new architectural parts seals the entry of Feqat Harak into new sedentary form of livelihood and with diverse economic activities, although the main subsistence base became agro-pastoralism (summer cultivation and winter transhumance). Sedentarization thus in all sense of the concept, is achieved with the co-introduction of *nahsa* dwelling among the Feqat Harak. Of course, earlier the formation of settlement centers in the valley increased the sedentary lifeways of the Feqat Harak. But since these architectural types suit mobile life ways, the families were prone for movement, although the settlement centers were permanent. Moreover, regardless of the permanence of these settlement centers the transhumance structure (make up) of the communities made them to live on constant mobility (movement). The co-introduction of cultivation subsistence and *nahsa* dwelling significantly decreased the mobility rate both at community and individual family levels by introducing alternate livelihood and diversification of subsistence activities.

The final note with regard to the *nahsa* is the high association of the dwelling with agro-pastoral way of subsistence. The structural and functional components of *nahsa* reflect the transition from the mobile (transhumance) livelihood towards full based sedentary agriculture, and hence the dwellers have mixed characteristics, particular in comparison with other *nahsa* dwellers in the highland. The durable and complex type of dwelling with highly specialized domestic space of the dwelling resemble the dwellers with the sedentary agricultural society, while the considerable possession of livestock and seasonal movement resemble with pastoral society. Table 5.1 summarizes the possession of livestock in randomly selected Feqat Harak villages in the plateau. Overwhelming majority of the families possess at least one type of livestock; either cattle, sheep or goat.

Only 6 out of 36 families who live in the plateau do not have any possession of livestock, and another 6 families have all kinds of livestock. The rest 24 families have either one or two types of livestock, and all dwellers have variable quantity of chicken. The detailed statistical analysis of the livestock possession and distribution will be presented in the next chapter, but what is important at this point is how the possession livestock is an important component in the *nahsa* dwelling. The phenomenon will be clear when compared with the next dwelling type, *mereba'e*, and how the possession of livestock disappeared alongside the evolution of *mereba'e* dwelling.

| | Village/ cluster | No. Family | Sample | Family Detail | Livestock Type | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | Cattle | Sheep | Goat |
| 1 | Andal | 2 | 2 | Family 1 | - | 50 | 15 |
| | | | | Family 2 | 2 | 40 | - |
| 2 | Mereba’e | 9 | 6 | Family 1 | 5-8 | 25-30 | 5-8 |
| | | | | Family 2 | 2-3 | - | - |
| | | | | Family 3 | 5-8 | - | - |
| | | | | Family 4 | - | 5-10 | - |
| | | | | Family 5 | - | - | - |
| | | | | Family 6 | - | - | - |
| 3 | Afuma | 12 | 6 | Family 1 | 1-2 | - | 5-8 |
| | | | | Family 2 | 4-6 | 35-40 | - |
| | | | | Family 3 | - | 2-5 | - |
| | | | | Family 4 | - | 2-5 | - |
| | | | | Family 5 | 2-4 | - | - |
| | | | | Family 6 | - | - | - |
| 4 | Bozo | 15 | 6 | Family 1 | 5-6 | 25-35 | 60-80 |
| | | | | Family 2 | - | 5-10 | 5-10 |
| | | | | Family 3 | - | 5-10 | 5-10 |
| | | | | Family 4 | 1-2 | 5-10 | - |
| | | | | Family 5 | - | 3-5 | - |
| | | | | Family 6 | - | - | - |
| 5 | Ab’a | 27 | 6 | Family 1 | 2-5 | - | 150-200 |
| | | | | Family 2 | 7-10 | 30-40 | - |
| | | | | Family 3 | 15-20 | 20-25 | - |
| | | | | Family 4 | 2-4 | 10-15 | 5-7 |
| | | | | Family 5 | 5-10 | 20-25 | 10-15 |
| | | | | Family 6 | - | - | - |
| 6 | Gurubtiya | >40 | 6 | Family 1 | 10-15 | 15-20 | - |
| | | | | Family 2 | - | 15-20 | - |
| | | | | Family 3 | 10-15 | 30-40 | 40-50 |
| | | | | Family 4 | 6-10 | 10-21 | 21-28 |
| | | | | Family 5 | 10-15 | 14-15 | - |
| | | | | Family 6 | 61-50 | 14-16 | - |
| 7 | Qlu’z | | 6 | Family 1 | - | 20-30 | 13-21 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | Family 2 | 13 | - | 20-31 |
| | | | | Family 3 | 20-30 | - | - |
| | | | | Family 4 | 14-16 | - | - |
| | | | | Family 5 | - | - | - |
| | | | | Family 6 | 13-14 | - | - |

Table 5.1: Livestock possession in some villages in Qohaito Plateau

## 5.4. House Form: *Mereba'e*

*Mereba'e* is a rectangular or square type of dwelling made either by stone or brick wall with sand and cement mortar and corrugated iron sheet roof. *Mereba'e* is the last in the evolution of dwelling types among the Feqat Harak and other nearby clans. The first *mereba'e* house was constructed in the 1979 in the then newly established IDP shelter in the village of *mereba'e* (the name of the village derived from the dwelling type). Two blocks of bungalow each having 10 rooms (4m x 4m) was constructed by the Ethiopian government to house the IDP families. The dwellers of these two blocks belonged to the Feqat Harak clan and lived temporarily before they finally resettled in their villages. After all the displaced families were resettled back in their village, the two blocks became elementary school and literacy center until 1994. In 1994, a new school was constructed next to the village, and these blocks were abandoned. Nowadays, these two blocks are abandoned, and are used as granary by the family of Haj Suleiman Abdela. *Mereba'e* thus was introduced in recent decades, and the construction of *mereba'e* paused for more than two decades after the construction of the IDP shelters. It was only in 1994 that a new and rapid *mereba'e* construction started in the new residential lots

distributed to the descendants of Feqat Harak (Mashur for Enda Sofi and Wekeiro for Enda Abdela segments).

*Mereba'e* dwelling has totally different structural, functional and residential characteristics compared with the other traditional architectures. The construction materials used for building *mereba'e* are predominantly exotic to the local setting/availability of the area. Corrugated iron sheet, brick, cement, timber, tile, metal/wooden door and window, limestone and paint, and gravel are all brought from external source. Only limited raw materials are supplied from the local source; boulder, water and labor. Thus the introduction of *mereba'e* as distinct architectural type demonstrates the increase impact of (integration) local, regional and international forces in the ordinary livelihood of the Feqat Harak.

*Mereba'e* also requires skilled labor in every stage of the construction process; starting from the foundation, concrete block erection, leveling and land filling, masonry, roof covering, tile fixing, and paint and decoration are the several skilled labor required for the construction of *mereba'e.* A construction worker can have more than one skill, but is it quite common that the construction of the homestead requires the involvement of many skilled individuals. As shown previously, the construction of *nahsa* requires limited level of skilled manpower, but often the required skills are drawn from the collaborative labor (people volunteering the cooperative work). In the case of *mereba'e* construction, all the skilled labors are recruited based on wage contract, purely monetary agreement. In 2015, the average wage for unskilled construction labor was 200-300, while the skilled labor ranges between 500 and 700 (Eritrean Nakfa); the tile fixing and roof covering been the top paid jobs. In the construction of *nahsa, agudo* and

*galba* dwelling types the required labor is supplied from the family and non-kin cooperatives.

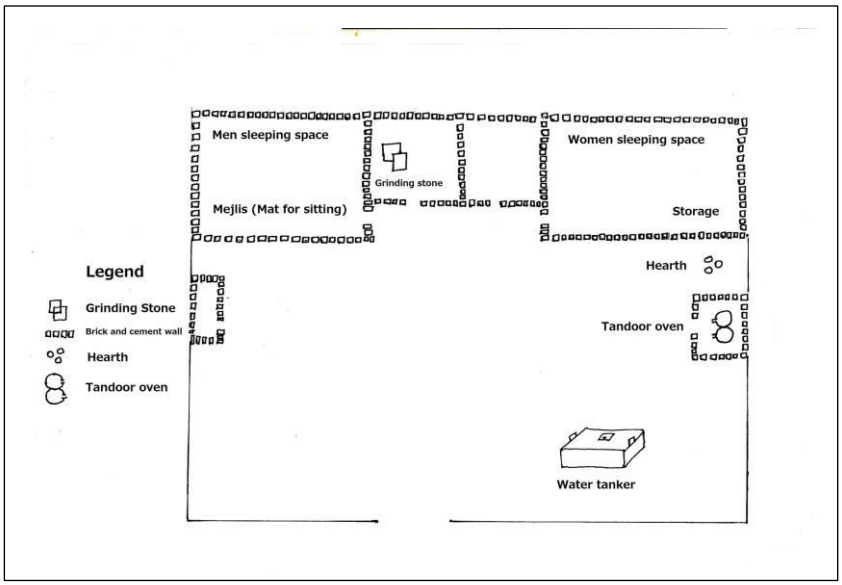



Diagram 5.4: *Mereba'e* compound in Wekeiro

The social make up of *mereba'e* dwellers is also distinct from the other three types of houses in many aspects. First of all, *mereba'e* homesteads in the village of Wekeiro are inhabited by nuclear family. None of them is inhabited by extended or joint family, and most of the houses are owned by individuals who work in the Gulf States as migrant workers or families who has a member abroad. Two main reasons can be pointed out as contributing factors for the high tendency of nuclear family in *mereba'e* dwelling. The first reason for the nuclear family structure of *mereba'e* is related with the definite boundary of the residential land allocated per holder/family. The village is established by a masterplan (urban plan) based distribution of land, and every household has cartographically delimited 20m x 25m plot of land, and expansion is never the case. Contrary to this, in *nahsa* and *agudo* homesteads it is possible to expand to the outer premises of the homestead, and all what is required is to mark (delimit) the new area

engulfed in the compound by fig tree. This open land practice allows families to freely expand their homestead freely based on their size and necessity.

The second major reason for the high prevalence of nuclear family in *mereba'e* homestead is the financial inability of newly married couples to construct an extension room within the compound of their parents. The most common way of compound expansion in *nahsa* and *agudo* dwelling is when a married son builds his residence inside his parent's compound. This phenomenon does not exist in *mereba'e* homestead due to fixed geographical dimension of the residential plot and high expense of *mereba'e* construction. Newly married couples hence cannot afford to construct extra room inside their parents' *mereba'e* compound, unless supported by large business establishment or remittance from overseas. The subsistence base of *mereba'e* dwellers also has high degree of variation compared with the other three dwelling types. The residents undergo non-pastoral economic activities and neither of them except three families do have any kind of livestock in possession. The only common animal kept is the handful chicken collection and only three households own sheep/goat, and few other families two to five cattle.

| **Family No.** | **Family Type** | **Polygyny** | **Family Head residence** | **Family member living overseas** | **Livestock** | **Type of Livestock** | **Extra income** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1** | Nuclear | ✓ (3) | Saudi Arabia | No | Yes | Sheep (11), ox (1) | Owns a hotel in Adi Keih, a mill in Wekeiro, and a Toyota car |
| **2** | Nuclear | ☒ | Wekeiro | No | No | No | Owns a butcher |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | in Adi Keih, and works as mason |
| **3** | Nuclear | ☒ | Saudi Arabia | Son | Yes | Sheep (10), donkey (1), oxen (2), and chicken | Owns a truck |
| **4** | Nuclear | ☒ | Wekeiro | 3 sons | No | No | Runs brother's truck |
| **5** | Nuclear | Divorced | Wekeiro | No | No | No | Public servant |
| **6** | Nuclear | ☒ | Saudi Arabia | No | Yes | Sheep (5), cow (1), oxen (2) and chicken | |
| **7** | Nuclear | ✓ (2) | Wekeiro | Son | Yes | Cow (2), calf (1) | |
| **8** | Nuclear | ☒ | Wekeiro | Son | Yes | Sheep (20) | |
| **9** | Nuclear | ✓ (2) | Returned from Saudi Arabia | son | Yes | chicken | Village administrator, and runs a TV house |
| **10** | Nuclear | ☒ | Wekeiro | Sister | No | No | Member of militia |
| **11** | Nuclear | ☒ | Saudi Arabia | No | No | No | |
| **12** | Nuclear | ☒ | Wekeiro | No | Yes | Sheep (15) | Previously had tea room in the school |
| **13** | Nuclear | ☒ | Wekeiro | Brother | No | No | Wife works as home based Tylor |
| **14** | Nuclear | ☒ | Saudi Arabia | No | No | No | Owns house in Adi Keih |
| **15** | Nuclear | ✓ (2) | Saudi Arabia | No | No | No | First wife works as teacher |
| **16** | Nuclear | ☒ | Qatar | No | No | No | Rent a house |
| **17** | Nuclear | ☒ | Wekeiro | Son and daughter | Yes | Goat (300) | |
| **18** | Nuclear | ☒ | Saudi Arabia | Daughter | No | No | Owns a farm and bee hive in |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | nearby village |
| **19** | Nuclear | ☒ | Saudi Arabia | No | No | No | |
| **20** | Nuclear | ☒ | Returned from Saudi Arabia | No | Yes | Chicken | |

Table 5.2: Sample of family conditions in Wekeiro

One of the landmark features of the introduction of *mereba'e* dwelling in Qohaito plateau is the emergence of non-agropastoral pattern of livelihood/families. Table 5.2 presents the statistical data of 20 randomly selected families (out of 44) dwelling in the village of Wekeiro, which is exclusive *mereba'e* village. The table shows many indicators to assess the degree of dependence of the families on agro-pastoral subsistence activities, and the emergence of non-pastoral activities as the result of many internal and external factors.

The main indicators are the possession of livestock (type and scale), residence of family head (inside the country or abroad) or presence of any family member who lives overseas, and the alternative livelihood activities practiced by the family. The replacement of agropastoral by non agropastoral activities is evident from the statistical data in many ways. First, the number of livestock holders sharply reduced compared with the other villages in the plateau. Only 9 out of 20 families own any kind of livestock in the village of Wekeiro. We saw in the previous section (table 5.1) that out of 36 families, 30 families own livestock. In Wekeiro, *mereba'e* dwelling village, however the number of families with any kind of animal decreased to less than half. The second important trend in the transformation is the predominance of small types of livestock. In other villages, the number of cattle (ox and cow) share significant amount

of the animal population. In Wekeiro however, most animals are small animals; sheep, goat and chicken, and hence the animal types kept by the villagers indicate the continuous decline of agro-pastoral way of livelihood in favor of alternative non-agropastoral mode of livelihood. The detailed statistical and qualitative analysis of the data will be discussed in the following chapter.

# Chapter Six

## *Multivariate Qualitative and Quantitative Interpretation of the Data of Sedentary Villages in the Nabagade Valley and Qohaito Plateau*

Of all kinds of anthropological and archaeological data, the house stands primary with respect to the level of empiricism and diversity of data. The house is space, referred as built environment, where all domestic activities take place, represent the total mundane livelihood activities. "The single most important artifact for reconstruction of past society is the house in which people dwell" (Samsom 1990: 1). Moreover, the house is lived on daily bases, and this increases the empiricism and observability of house in anthropological and archaeological research. Kinship is one amongst many products of the domestic activities that takes place inside the built environment, and in due course kinship and other familial relationship is created and acted, produced and reproduced. Carsten noted "kinship is made in house through the intimate sharing of space, food and nurturance that goes on within the domestic space" (Carsten 2004: 3).

The house, thus, is the medium of domestic activities, where kinship and lineage principles are produced, confirmed, played and enacted on daily bases and with special occasion (rituals and ceremonies) the relation is reiterated. For the sake of generating diverse nature of data, this dissertation follows the wider conceptualization and application of the concept of house; not merely as individual homestead but also collection of homesteads/households, as Glowacki and Vogeikoff-Brogan (2011) outlined two levels of household studies distinguishing small-scale (household) production and large-scale household formed by the cluster of individual settlements.

The *scale* of settlement analysis that fits the nature and size of sedentary villages among the Feqat Harak is a crucial parameter to analyze the complex interaction in the research area. Myriad of scales of analysis and terminologies exist in anthropology, particularly in archaeology, referring the different size of settlement and relationship among them; ward, agglomeration, community, fusion, coalescence, aggregation, convergence and nucleation (Birch 2013). Most of these terms and concepts (agglomeration, fusion, coalescence, convergence and nucleation) explain how smaller settlement aggregates to form bigger settlements, or are engaged in regional network of exchange. Smaller settlement aggregation involves a historical process transformation to become organically related to each other to form a regional system, and hence provide viable conceptual tool to analyze the process of sedentary formation and spread in Nabagade Valley and Qohaito Plateau.

But the Nabagade Valley and Qohaito Plateau settlement history does not only include settlement aggregation to form bigger settlements. The Feqat Harak history also involves the opposite track, i.e. lineage segmentation and settlement bifurcation. For instance, the first settlement center, Andal, was bifurcated collaterally with the first lineage segmentation. This is the exact reversal of community formation and settlement aggregation. Thus, the analytical frame should compose the fluctuation between the segmentation and corporate community formation in dynamic historical circumstances. This fluctuation pattern of social and ecological organization is recently adhered by the dynamic model developed by Marcus (1993), who deconstructed the segmentary-unitary, fission-fusion dichotomy in the study of segmentary lineage

communities/societies. A similar situation is also observed in Feqat Harak's sedentary village formation and spread, where breakage of lineage and settlement prevails in one historical circumstance followed by aggregation of settlements and corporate community formation in another setting.

The analytical frame for the reconstruction of the socio-ecological drivers of sedentary village expansion comprehensively synchronizes two fundamental conditions, but at different levels of understanding. These two phenomena are vertically arranged, and the first level is the lineage segmentation (settlement bifurcation) as the fundamental principles of the social organization and a factor in the process. The second level of the analytical framework is the community or corporate group formation by settlement aggregation of the pre-existing segments (primary or secondary types). The settlement history and the spread of sedentary villages is the result of the repetitive cyclical fluctuation between these phenomena.

The analytical frame treats the lineage in a refined way, not merely, a social strategy for political ends but rather a holistic institutional approach to show historical trends, and how change in each institution, systemic way, creates the full story. The best to solve the preexisting problem or to achieve the historicization of lineage theory is by redefining along indigenous principles and related it with commensurate analytical variables with high degree of empiricism. The reconstruction of the historical trajectories under which the expansion took place is very important, and depends on the alliance of lineage theory with remarkable empirical data. The most empirical data individual house and aggregate of houses that are referred are settlement.

The notions of community and ward have extra advantage with respect to the Nabagade - Qohaito context. Since, the Feqat Harak occupation of the valley and the plateau is not only a prehistorical and historical but also continues to the present day, and approach that combines the present and past renders best analytical tool for the subject at hand. Community and ward perspectives, especially community, offer analytical framework how a historically situated spatio-social (sociospatial) relationship emerged, and how the relationship exercised in the present day, and becomes double-edge tool. Yvonne Marshall (2002) previously classified community into two with respect to their relationship to the present and past; the first one a community defined by their present relationship to the present and largely with their place of residence; second a community defined by their relationship to the past and to other people (Marshall 2002). I propose a third variant referring to the coexistence of present and past defined communities, and expressed ritually and ceremonially at different times symbolically.

Following the above arguments, the scale of settlement analysis applied in this dissertation is the community level of social analysis. The concept of community however needs cautious application for it had been used to mean number of different things ranging from co-residence and face to face interaction to ideational or imagined communities (Peterson and Drennan 2005).

In this study, the idea of community refers to the formation of a transitional small scale settlement formed by cluster of homesteads but not big enough to form large villages. The core idea is how these small scale settlements, which were the driving force for the

expansion process took place, and are organized in space to form distinct inter-community interaction intra-ethnically and inter-ethnically. Birch (2013) concluded that "while the concepts of community is put to different uses by scholars in various fields, the consensus seems to be that the local community is one of the most important contexts for social action, interaction, and identity formation" (Birch 2013: 7).

As Birch (2013) outlined the community is the culmination of activities carries out by the inter-family and inter-ward interaction that involves identity formation. O'Gorman (2010) attempted similarly to configure the formation of community resulting from complex interaction among tribal societies, and advocated for the "conceptualization of community on identity, agency, social boundary, meaning, and social repercussion" (O'Gorman 2010: 573). He concluded that community is always dynamic, historically and geographically situated, and made up of human relationship. Peterson and Drennan also noted that a local community is formed when a range of social interactions is intensely concentrated within a single well-defined group of households that interact only much less intensely with households outside the group (Peterson and Drennan 2005).

Finally, most community studies are uni-directional formulating the process of how small-scale communities grow by integration (aggregation) or getting in a constant interaction. There are rare community studies that are formulated to explore how communities break, split and/or degenerate. This is the conceptual and methodological collision of integrating lineage theory (founded on the principle of segmentation) with

the mainstream community studies (targeted at studying aggregation). The analytical framework of this dissertation is thus grounded on negotiating the principles of separation (segmentation) and aggregation (community formation) to holistically explain the pendulum movement that occurred in Feqat Harak formation and expansion of sedentary villages.

This chapter seeks to formulate a multivariate analysis of the 400 years old recent settlement history of Nabagade Valley and Qohaito Plateau culture history by systematically synchronizing the multiple factors in a single analytical framework. The process of the formation and spread of sedentary villages from the valley to the plateau was driven by various interacting social and ecological driving forces. The empirical data presented in the last three chapters reveal those three critical variables that drove the whole process of the formation and spread of sedentary villages across the landscape. The three iconic variables are lineage segmentation, environmental changes and catastrophes, community and supra-community interaction locally and regionally.

## 6.1 Qualitative analysis

This section proposes two peculiar analytical points this dissertation synthesizes that are relevant in the community formation and identity creation of the Feqat Harak clan, and the expansion mode (with collateral creation of distinct communities) of the settlement expansion. The first section discusses how the shift in identity and ethnicity occurred right from the very foundation of the lineage group and its historical context. The second point of this section proposes three modes (types) of settlement expansion that

occurred in the Feqat Harak; *segmentary, hydraulic* and *integrated* types of settlement expansion.

### *6.1.1. Shifting ethnicities*

The clan genesis and its ethnic affiliation of the Feqat Harak clan represent a unique way of lineage formation and ethnic identity. The apical ancestor was a begotten child of a Tigrinya ancestor and Tigre ancestress (Fatuma), but their descendants shifted to Saho ethnicity (ethnolinguistic identity). The Tigrinya ethnic group belongs to the Semitic language family, and the members of the ethnic group dwell in the highland (plateau). The Tigre ethnic group also belongs to the Semitic language classification, but the people dwell in the coastal lowland. The Saho language on the other hand belongs to the lowland branch of Eastern Cushitic language family and currently dwells in all topographic and climatic regions of the country (highland, lowland and the mid-altitude). During the formation of the lineage group however, the Saho people predominantly dwell in the lowland, mid-altitude and the valley between the highland and the lowland (Nabagade and Hadas Valleys).

A question must be raised why the newly formed lineage group (early descendants of the Feqat Harak) adapted a language neither of the apical ancestor nor of the apical ancestress. Why, when and how did the '*shift in ethnicity'* occurred? Based on the genealogical and lineage history of the Feqat Harak, we can argue that the clan adapted the Saho language right from the beginning, although the son of the apical ancestor was raised among the Tigre communities in Zula. Neither Tigre nor Tigrinya ethnic group practice or are socially organized on segmentary lineage lines, but the Saho does. The

rapid lineage segmentation and formation of autonomous supra-clan indicate that the social organization of the Feqat Harak share strongly the social character of the Saho from the outset. Although the 'when' question is understood, 'why' and 'how' remain intriguing. The reason why the early descendants of the clan drifted from the paternal and maternal ethnicities could be several but two strategic points seems to have played decisive role; the religious background of the apical ancestor (*Feq* Ibrahim), and the residence customs of the Tigre communities.

The apical ancestor served much of his life as a Christian priest, and the turning point for the genesis of the lineage group is his conversion to Islam. His conversion took place at the end of 16$^{th}$ and beginning of 17$^{th}$ centuries. The religious and political condition of the period of his conversion was the most volatile period in the Muslim-Christian relation in the history of the region. The region sank down the ashes of Ahmed Gragn war which devastated the region and the tension escalated. The post-Ahmed Gragn war political and religious condition was tense, and the newly converted descendants of the apical ancestor might compelled him to remain aside from their Christian community members (descent group) in the plateau.

The Tigre population at that time, especially the inhabitants of Zula, was Muslim and would have been favorable place for residence for the members to remain in their ancestress root as Tigre. Here, the family situation (history) of the maternal grandparent, and the residence customs of the Tigre based on patrilocality could have been the main reasons for the drift away. At family level, *Feq* Mohammad Sn. disbanded his followers into the scattered tribes of the Saho, and few Afar in the escarpment and coastal areas.

This scenario led for the disappearance of the family, and secondly paved the way for further relationship of his descendants with the Saho communities. This could be a critical factor for *Feq* Mohammad Jn.'s decision to dwell among the Saho tribes in the valley, where once were ruled under the jurisdiction of his maternal grandfather, and now under his followers. This prior encounter between the Saho tribes and the family of *Feq* Mohammad Sn. is an essential feature for *Feq* Mohammad Jn.'s security and protection.

The second reason, patrilocal customs of the Tigre people where *Feq* Mohammad Jn. grew, played significant role in the decision of *Feq* Mohammad to leave Zula in search of paternal homeland. This factor is widely narrated in the oral history or folk history of the Feqat Harak. The oral history explains why the *Feq* Mohammad Jn. left Zula but does not explain why he shifted to Saho ethnic identity. This phenomenon could have occurred during the time of his departure and coming to Qohaito and Nabagade Valley, and when he found out that his father served in the Churches located in the valley, and Qohaito Plateau. Since he and contemporary members of the Feqat Harak believe that the apical ancestor prior to his conversion lived in the Valley, he resided and established his settlement in the valley (Andal).

The residence of early Feqat Harak in the valley brought them in direct contact with the Saho speaking communities, and led them to adapt the language leaving Tigre, which had been the mother tongue of the *Feq* Mohammad Jn. This phenomenon is interesting and demonstrates the formation of early community relations and lineage in the valley. The Feqat Harak shift of ethnicity is neither the result of unique political, religious and

residential variables that drove them to adapt neither paternal nor material ethnic identities, nor the contribution of the members of Melhin Mi'embara in forging new ethnic alliance and identity is undeniable.

*6.1.2 Types of settlement expansion*

The formation and expansion of sedentary villages among the Feqat Harak both in the valley and valley-plateau is the result of interacting factors of lineage segmentation, settlement organization and household dynamics, and inter-community interaction (including at regional level). This dissertation finally synthesizes that three types or modes of settlement expansion. That took place across four centuries, and in two distinct ecological and topographic zones; *segmentation*, *hydraulic* and *integrated* modes/types of settlement expansion. Segmentation type of expansion characterizes the expansion of settlement centers in the valley from the second generation all the way to the ninth generation. All the settlement centers in the Nabagade Valley that belong to the Feqat Harak were formed during the segmentation period. A total of six settlement centers (Andal, Gadelo, Dalo, Maeyan, Madhulo and Gerwan) were formed in the valley driven primarily by lineage segmentation within a space of nine generations. Actually, the exact temporal range of the segmentary expansion was five generations because five of the settlement centers were formed from the $5^{th}$ to $9^{th}$ generation alongside the rapid lineage segmentations.

Although the predominant factor for the expansion of permanent settlement centers in the valley was apparently lineage segmentation, other factors such as scarce population, availability of open graze land, little or no competition from other lineage groups, and

the transhumant nature of the people are contributing factors in the process. The availability of open pasture in the valley (still does) added with scarce population and transhumant nature of the families had strong impact. The valley continues longitudinally in north-south orientation creating inaccessible topography for permanent agrarian settlement, which is why remains ignored from agricultural uses. The existence of extensive graze land and the mountainous terrain makes it favorable for nomadic and transhumance pastoralism. Meaning the availability of seasonal pastures especially in winter (rainy season of the area), flush flood and little rain in summer grow abundant grass for the livestock, hence plays great role in encouraging the Feqat Harak and other lineage groups to establish settlement center of perennial nature.

The reason why I categorize the settlement centers expansion as '*segmentary*' mode is because of the identical nature of the settlement centers that were flourishing in the valley. All the first six settlement centers are identical in terms of subsistence activities, architectural design, dwelling type, village layout and other settlement characteristics. It is the settlement version of lineage segmentation, where after segmentation took place, the two daughter entities (whether lineage or settlement) are identical. So were the settlement centers, except Andal, which to this day retained the religious, ritual, ceremonial and judiciary function of the clan. The other settlement centers however share strong resemblances, and this is why I explained the formation and expansion as segmentary driven. Secondly, the core factor in the process of settlement expansion was the rapid lineage segmentations.

*Hydraulic* type of sedentary village distribution and expansion represents the genesis and spread of settlement centers in Garadaf Plain. Map 2.2 shows the distribution of villages in the banks of the Nabagade stream and other tributaries. Similarly, the Feqat Harak villages in the valley are concentrated in similar riverine orientation in the Garadaf Plain. In the plain about 112 families belonging to the Minifere *kisho* are scattered along the banks of the major and minor streams. The *hydraulic* pattern of settlement formation and expansion is characterized by the establishment of long houses, wards and villages next to the bank, or the settlement configuration is a linear type along the course of the tributaries. Villages run parallel to the course of the river and the livelihood of the inhabitants is dependent on the flow of the river. Often, hydraulic pattern of settlement distribution is observed in irrigation-dependent agrarian or agro-pastoral communities living in areas with low rainfall, but with enough flush flood flowing across the territory.

Nabagade Valley in general and Garadaf Plain in particular have an ideal topographic and ecological condition for the formation and spread of riverine settlement suitable for agro-pastoral occupation based on spate irrigation (river diversion). Topographically, Garadaf Plain is located at the foot of the Qohaito Plateau and adjacent escarpment, and at the upper altitude of the coastal lowlands, at an average of 1000-1200 meter above sea level. The vicinity of the plain is where the tributaries enter their middle course with reduced velocity, and relatively wider banks, and thick soil profile (alluvial fields) renewed each year. All these topographic and geomorphological features are crucial variables for river-side settlements.

Ecologically and climatically, the Garadaf plain has hot and dry climatic condition with annual rainfall of less than 300mm, which is inadequate for sustainable agricultural activity. The distribution of rainfall is also another problem, and there are weeks and months between consecutive rainy days, which create inability to undergo proper rain-fed cultivation. Despite the little amount of rainfall and uneven distribution, the Garadaf Plain is located at the fringes (frontier) of two ecological zones; the plateau and coastal lowland. Both ecological zones have swapping rainy seasons, and since the Garadaf Plain is located at the border of these ecological zones, it gets little rain during both rainy seasons. And secondly, the plain and the valley receive adequate flush flood during the rainy season of the plateau (late June to August). That is why the plain has high reputation for long cycle crops, such as maize and sometimes sorghum, because the crop can maintain germination between distant rainy seasons. Hence, the benefit of two rainy season and flush flood is a determinant factor in the emergence of hydraulic communities in the plain and parts of the valley.

Comparison of segmentation and hydraulic modes of settlement expansion demonstrates important transformation and evolution of new patterns. Village composition, for instance, in the settlement centers formed as a result of segmentation consists of primary and secondary lineage segments of the clan. The process only results in the multiplicity of supra-clans and identical settlement centers. In Garadaf however settlements are composed of inter-clan that belongs to the same *kisho*, Minifere. The emergence of multi-clan settlement, village composition of Feqat Harak and Non-Feqat Harak families, is a major transition in the processual development of sedentary village formation in the plain. The transformation of lineage specific settlement into inter-clan

is thus the chief difference between the segmentation and hydraulic modes of settlement by the Feqat Harak.

Another major difference between the segmentation and hydraulic types of expansion is related to the village plan of the resultant villages. All, but Andal, settlement center formed as the result of segmentation have dispersed kind of village plan (layout). This type of settlement layout is associated with the pastoral subsistence activities, where the village residents have adequate space for keeping and grazing the animals. Cattle raid expeditions, according to the oral history, are also a factor in the dispersed mode of settlement for security and protection reasons. If one settlement, village or ward, is attacked, the neighboring settlement will have enough time to rescue the livestock and prepare for counter-attack. The subsidence and protection factors are the drivers of the dispersed type of settlement. In hydraulic type of settlement expansion on the other hand the wards and villages have linear orientation parallel to the course of the main stream. In terms of layout both types of settlement are dispersed but the geometry of dispersal is different. The former dispersed haphazardly in all direction but in the hydraulic type of dispersal has only one direction; along the course of the river.

The time scale for the emergence of hydraulic type settlement expansion is not clear. But from the history of subsistence and special landholding practices that emerged (developed) in the valley, a general inference can be constructed indirectly. The historical event of *Ziyari Tena* clearly stipulates that the transition into agriculture or agro-pastoralism subsistence base took effect by the turn of 20$^{th}$ century. Since, these settlements are highly associated with agriculture particularly irrigation agriculture,

these hydraulic settlements must had been established at the same time with the introduction of incipient agriculture or even later. Because, due to social and engineering infrastructure required to transform incipient to horticulture, and horticulture to irrigation agriculture, the development of hydraulic settlement should have occurred much later. The second indicator of the post-agricultural introduction of the hydraulic settlement in Garadaf valley is related to the hereditary land ownership, and the number of generation counted from the first holders. I carried out a detailed record of hereditary fields transfer in Ma'etarta village. The current generation is the fourth linear agriculturalists who plough the hereditary land in the village, and claim that all the villages were contemporaneous in their formation.

In sum, the segmentary and hydraulic modes of settlement expansion are the process that geared the formation of new settlements in the valley only, and this accounts roughly three quarters of history of settlement formation by the Feqat Harak. Sedentary village expansion in the valley covers the first three hundred years of the lineage history, and coincidentally the expansion process was very smooth, except the cattle raid expedition that sometimes bankrupted the members of the lineage group. The presence of cattle raid especially since the beginning of the 19$^{th}$ century added with the environmental strain was the problems that negatively influenced the distribution of settlement in the valley. The most complex process of the Feqat Harak formation of villages occurred when the Feqat Harak began to form villages in the Qohaito village, which by the turn of the 20$^{th}$ century was a buffer zone between the Saho and Tigrinya communities. The expansion of sedentary villages from the valley to Qohaito plateau is the core topic of the dissertation, and here after will be discussed in detail.

The third mode of settlement expansion, *integrated* type, represents the multivariate phenomena of valley to plateau expansion, created as the result of long term inter-community (ethnic) relation mediated by the topographic setting of the border zone. The notion of integrate means the existence of several interacting variables dictating the process of expansion. As indicated previously, the cessation of segmentation at the $9^{th}$ generation, three generation before the onset of permanent village formation, marked the beginning of non-kinship variables shaping the process. This post-segmentation era process of sedentary village expansion will set the multivariate analysis of the systemic process.

The integrate mode of valley to plateau expansion had four main components that surfaced in the process. The three parts of the system are *lineage* organization, *environmental* problem, and *inter-community* interaction. In the beginning the lineage effect was significant but diminished over time giving way for the non-kinship variables to lead the process. The contribution of each variable in the process of expansion could be explained as follows;

① *Lineage organization*:- lineage factor alongside with other kinship related variables had considerable role in the decision of new settlement location, and the direction and location of expansion was determined by lineage affiliation. The two routes of valley to plateau migration were created by the two major supra-clan; *Enda* Sofi and *Enda* Abdela. This is a continuous cycle of segregation and reintegration, and fluctuation of lineage effect in settlement expansion. In the early

phases of the Feqat Harak, early Andal, the two branches (result of the first segmentation) the two branches were segregated (differentiated) from each other; one settled in Andal and the other moved to Gadelo. After the 2nd and 3rd segmentations, the villages were again reintegrated in the hydraulic mode of settlement expansion. Then members of clan (primary to tertiary) began to settle in common villages, particularly in the Garadaf Plain villages, and there is no supra-clan specific zone in the valley. Later, in the valley to plateau expansions phase again spatial segregation occurred, and each branch followed different route, and settled in different villages. The first settlement center for the *Enda* Abdela branch was Gurubtiya, and for the *Enda* Sofi Da'ero. Smaller villages began to nest around each settlement center inhabited by members of the respective branch. The segregation continued until the final stage of village formation in the plateau. The last phase in the process occurred in 1994, when under the new land proclamation by the government, the member of the clan allocated residential land for all descendants regardless of their place of residence (domestic and overseas). They founded the new villages framed by town plan for each lineage group; Mashur and Wekeiro for *Enda* Sofi and *Enda* Abdela respectively. Thus the *Enda* Sofi and *Enda* Abdela dwell in exclusive territory in the plateau; where the former live in the southern part of the territory while the latter in the northern part.

The impact of lineage organization at the community (ward/village) level of settlement is little. There are of course some villages that are inhabited by primary segments; such as Ab'a (Ishmael Boka). But majority of the villages are mixed (multi-clan) composed of one or more primary segments. Gurubtiya for instance

has families that belong to all *Enda* Abdela affiliated lineage groups. Other villages however have not more than two primary segments. Finally, the recently founded village of Wekeiro is established for all members of the *Enda* Abdela, and hence gradually the impact of lineage organization in the local level (village) of settlement disappeared.

② *Environmental problem*:- the environmental dimension of the valley to plateau expansion is apparently one of the decisive factors. It led to the second popular historical event in the process; the initiation of *Ziyari Tena*. The contribution of the environmental catastrophe that hit the Horn of Africa in the second half of the 19$^{th}$ century brought systemic changes and realignment among the people of the region. The occasional outbreak of small pox epidemics (such as the one reported by Bruce and other travelers), and the landmark drought of the 1880s caused massive socio-ecological realignment and transformation. The impact of the drought was severe for the pastoral population due to their total dependence on agrarian communities for food supply/grain supply. And the quick lose of livestock and the fragmentation and shrinkage of pastureland creates quicker bankruptcy among the pastoral communities compared to the agrarian communities who can store their produce for considerable period of time. Meaning, the food source of the pastoralists, which is the livestock, perished quickly, while the agricultural produce of the agrarian communities was maintained for long period of time. This imbalance in the maintenance (storage) of the primary source of food between agrarian and pastoral communities disturbed the preexisting 'entente cordiale' type of exchange (interdependence) in favor of the agricultural communities. The shift

and disturbance in the entente cordial equation in favor of the agricultural communities left the pastoral communities with no means of livelihood, and totally lost control on the exchange patterns.

The only remaining option for the impoverished pastoralists during such stressful period was short – long range migration and change in their livelihood pattern, which is sometimes adverse to their existing socio-political organization. Migration, especially large scale, involving the entire families, would have been a least choice because the spatial scale (coverage) of the drought region-wide. The entire region was directly affected and the scarcity of food throughout the region collapsed the local and regional trade network of food exchange for the entire region was under drought. The *ecological totality* of the Saho tribes, the possession of tribal territory ranging from the mountain to the island would have granted rescue plan for the inhabitants to turn to the coast for survival. The coast, due to semi desert and desert climatic conditions, had been scarcely populated, even to this day, despite the presence of diverse marine life, edible species and minerals that can support large population. Nothing is certain from the oral tradition how this 'fishing' option was played during the continuous drought that plagued the region.

What is certain is how the post-drought recovery and subsistence transformation took effect. During the drought and post-drought years (end of 1880s and start of 1890s) major political, social and economic developments brewed for almost half a century culminated at the formation of new political and social order. Hence, the environmental hazard and its recovery occurred in parallel with the other

developments. The immediate post recovery coincided with the first formation of Feqat Harak villages in Qohaito, and quickly was followed by the first cultivation ritual, *Ziyari Tena*. The time for the first *Ziyari Tena* could be any year between 1911 and 1927 (deducted from oral account and inscription).

This incident was, according to the oral history, the first ever agricultural practice in the history of the clan. But in my synthesis, *Ziyari Tena* could be the culmination of the slow process of transition into agropastoral economy (incorporating agricultural activities into the subsistence base). Spontaneous individual effort could have been carried out for a decade or longer, especially in the valley, during the immediate years of the post drought. The introduction of incipient among the Feqat Harak and other clans would have created new administrative issues particularly in administering the pastureland. The fact these communities practiced pastoralism for centuries assisted by trade, the process of transition into agriculture cannot occur in automatic switch. The social, ecological, technological and legal and other precondition that is required for the new economic regime needs to be satisfied.

Hence, in my view, *Ziyari Tena*, the cultivation ritual initiated by Qadi Abdela must be the finalization of the gradual process of transition into incipient agriculture, and signal the clan-wise entry into cultivation activities. Logically speaking, the change in subsistence as grand as pastoralism to agriculture cannot occur suddenly and automatically in one ceremony alone without significant background in the peoples' inclination and prior move in the direction. Some sources also claim that *Ziyari*

*Tena* was equally important for *Degiat* Zahlay also. He was barren with no male child, and he also sought the blessing of Feqat Harak in the ritual. It was after the ritual that *Degiat* Beyene, son of *Degiat* Zahlay, was born, and hence the exchange of blessing and cultivation technique was another dimension of *Ziyari Tena*. The ritual however symbolized the full blown transition into agropastoral economy and set cultivation norms of the Feqat Harak. It was decided by Qadi Abdela that the ritual should be commemorated every year in the same place (under a juniper tree near the village of Mereba'e) and at the same date (June 12$^{th}$ Geez calendar). It was also decided not to sow fields prior to the annual ritual, and hence ploughing is only possible after the 13$^{th}$. Moreover, *Ziyari Tena* could have also enhanced the community relationship between Tekonda'e principality and Feqat Harak because the Qohaito plateau was a rental territory between both. And hence the consolidation of cultivation activities enhances the relationship because the increase in the productive of the area is advantageous for both parties.

Finally, the drought at the end of 19$^{th}$ century contributed to the subsistence transition of the Feqat Harak into agriculture which resulted in the valley plateau expansion of sedentary villages. The first sedentary villages were occupied by very few families practicing incipient agriculture based on summer rain. For instance, the village of Gurubtiya, the only sedentary village of the Feqat Harak in the plateau, was inhabited by only four families. The scarcity of food in the immediate years of the post drought was the chief factor for the Feqat Harak and other clans' decision to practice agriculture, and similarly the loss of livestock total bankruptcy would have been another environment related factor driving the transition. Because,

the recovery of livestock takes very long time, especially large animals who have longer gestation period. The recovery of agricultural societies requires just one rainy season, and quickly reestablishes the normative subsistence activities. That is also probably when the pastoral communities shifted from large animals (cattle and camel) in to smaller animals (sheep and goat) due to quicker breeding time.

③ *Inter-community interaction*:- another causal factor in the valley to plateau expansion of sedentary villages is the evolution of new patterns of inter-community interaction at the border land. The earlier roots of the new community interaction lie at the start of the 19th century with the formation of Tigrinya principalities in the highland and segmentary state in the valley by pan-*kisho* Saho tribes. The Nabagade and Hadas valleys and their upland slopes were the border of the segmentary state (ruled by Assaurta pan-*kisho* organization), and in the highland there were several principalities; several along the edge of the escarpment; Senafe, Tekonda'e, Aret, Digsa; were the predominant principalities bordering the Saho speaking communities. By the beginning of the 19th century there were two main trade routes running from the plateau to the coast. One goes from Massawa – Arkeeko – Digsa, and the second one along Massawa – Arkeeko – Qohaito – Tekonda'e. The latter route was opened by 1810s and Krampf was the first traveler to pass the new trade corridor.

The segmentary state that evolved in the valley in the 19th century by the pan-*kisho* alliance Assaurta actually started in the previous century. There are three crucial factors that attributed to the segmentary state functioning as a distinct political

entity; definite territory, legitimate taxation, and regular and reserve army composed of *gombelle*. The segmentary state of the Assaurta controlled the territory between the Nayb sphere of influence in the coast, and highland. Initially the Assaurta and Saho individuals were involved in escorting caravan traders and trade (such as Salt). Later, due to probably the military alliance towards the end of the 19th century, the Assaurta were able to impose tax on the trade route, and this demonstrates the higher organizational capacity of the pan-*kisho*. There were four stations where the Assaurta used to collect tax. Hence, we can argue that the Assaurta had definite territory bounded by frontier where they exercised power.

The second important variable that qualifies the Assaurta segmentary state was the legitimate taxation right over the caravan route. Meaning, the four stations stretching from Massawa to Ruba Mesalih (Qohaito) demonstrates the existence of the segmentary state. This newly formed caravan route granted easy and short passage to the highland (Abyssinian Highland), and logically the Assaurta segmentary state prospered. Many European travelers in this century admire the safe passage through the corridor, and the absence of feudal lords and bandits in the corridor confirms the order and effective control by the segmentary state/s. The control and protection of the trade route in general and the settlements in particular by the segmentary state. Every Saho tribe had at that time and till recently a warrior class, called *gombelle* (*gombo ido* initiated), and a rank called *wedgit*. The gombelle army composed of youth warriors of the Assaurta was by far strong, and the *wedgit* is a rank given to special leaders and heroes. The attribution of the title is a self-proclaimed but approved by the collective/kinsmen during any ceremony.

*Wedgit* originally means the intestine part of a slaughtered animal. During a feast or ceremony a robust and physically fit member of the *gombelle* class declare to eat the *wedgit*, which symbolizes bravery and heroism. The participants applaud "*Yarigeni*"; we know you; and resonates that the people approved his *wedgit*hood. At times of war, the *wedgit* leads in the confrontation/battle.

Hence there was strong tradition of warrior class among the major Saho tribes especially among the Assaurta. The warrior class act s as a reserve army, and assemble at the time of conflict and during peace are disbanded to their villages until the next call. The special and unique scenario of the Assaurta, which confirms the segmentary statehood, was the regular army (fulltime) kept at the second half of the 19th century. The Assaurta has five regiments each derived from the tribe, and had fulltime chiefs. The Assaurta army composed of *gombelle* fought three major battles against Tigrean chiefs in Aladin-Maebele, Robrobiya and Sanako. The army was maintained until the emergence of Italians in the 19th century. Later an agreement was reached between the Assaurta and Italian liaison office in Massawa; and according to the agreement the Assaurta lifted the tax imposition and allowed free passage through the trade corridor and reduced the size of *gombelle* army. The Italians in return paid the salary of chiefs, and provided food for the army. The agreement brought the segmentary state to an end.

Now, let us explore the contribution of the existence of segmentary state in the valley and principalities in the plateau scattered along the edge of the escarpment to the emergence of new inter-ethnic/community interaction founded on one to one format. The community interaction had been for centuries and based on mutual exchange

(accord) founded on pastoral-agrarian symbiotic and optimal pattern. The unique feature of the inter-community interaction that evolved in the 19th century was bilateral-sided tendency of the community interaction. Three twin-format paired Saho-Tigrinya communities were formed in the process.

## 6.2 Quantitative Analysis

Chapters 4 and 5 presented statistical data about the lineage composition of the sedentary villages, the distribution and size of agricultural plot in the valley, livestock ownership and livestock type in the plateau, and household statistics in the village of Wekeiro. The statistical or quantitative data assist qualitative analysis by providing numerical value to the livelihood activities and trends of change. The first quantitative analysis this section discusses is related to the lineage composition of the sedentary village in the research area. Let us take Andal as representative of *segmentary*, Garadaf as *hydraulic* and Wekeiro as *integrated* modes of settlement expansion. All of the 26 (100%) households in Andal belong to *Enda* Abdela supra-clan. In Garadaf only 24 out of 95 (25%) belong to Feqat Harak, and the rest households, 75%, comprise Nare, Igila, Dassamo, and Ga'aso clans and lineage groups. Wekeiro and other villages in the plateau belong to *Enda* Abdela, and 4 out of 7 villages including Wekeiro villages are homogenous at supra-clan composition or primary segments. And only 3 villages (Gurubtiya, Eshika and Wekeiro) are multi-supra clan. Only Wekeiro comprises all the primary segments affiliated to *Enda* Abdela branch of the Feqat Harak. The homogeneity and heterogeneity of lineage composition of the sedentary villages at clan

and sub-clan levels demonstrate the fluctuating role of lineage organization in the process of formation and spread of sedentary villages.

The second parameter for qualitative analysis is the proportion of dwelling types in the research areas. I will skip *galba* from the statistical comparison due to the natural occurrence pattern of the rock shelter. The discussion will focus on the remaining three types of dwelling. In Andal, 21 *agudo*s and 5 *nahsa*s are found, 82% and 18% respectively. In other settlement centers found in the valley, majority of the dwelling are *agudo* type. In Garadaf plain however, representative of riverine settlement pattern, all the 95 dwelling are *nahsa*, and sometimes mixed with *agudo* type of house. All villages of the *Enda* Abdela in the plateau, except Wekeiro, comprise *nahsa* type of dwelling. There is no single *agudo* in the plateau, except *agudo*-like extension in few homesteads. The number of homesteads in Gurubtiya is 40, Mereba'e 9, Afuma 18, Bozo 13, and Qluz 16, and all these homesteads have *nahsa* dwelling. Finally, the village of Wekeiro has 44 complete households and few under construction during my fieldwork. All of these homesteads are *mereba'e* type of dwelling. Strikingly, it is an exclusively *mereba'e* village, and rarely small *nahsa* is constructed in the compound and functions either as *agoh* or coop. The distribution of dwelling types in the study area show the trends of subsistence and social change and added with other variables helps to gauge the scale and magnitude of subsistence and other livelihood changes.

The number of sedentary villages in the valley, Garadaf and plateau is another important variable to understand the dynamics of settlement pattern in the research area, and will be crucial factor to estimate the population density. 6 settlement centers are scattered in

the valley, and 1 settlement center in Garadaf plain. In the plateau, villages are scattered in the total area of roughly 2km by 4km ($8km^2$) see Map 7.1, and the Garadaf Plain has 1.5km by 4km area, which is $6km^2$m and the valley, as shown in the map more than $35km^2$ of area. The population density can be estimated to 149 families living in $8km^2$, and in Garadaf plain 112 families in $6km^2$, and about 300 families in the valley in an area of $35km^2$. The high population density variation among these locales indicates the degree of sedentism and subsistence base variation.

The number and type of livestock and ownership ratio are essential indicators of subsistence shift, degree of sedentism and rise of complexity, non-agropastoral livelihood and the creation of alternative livelihood. Table 5.1 summarizes the number of livestock in 6 villages in the plateau, each 6 randomly selected homesteads from each village. In the 36 families a total of 223 cattle, 457 sheep and 396 goats are owned by these families. In these villages a total of 1076 animals are found; 20.34% cattle, 42.47% sheep, and 36.80% goat. Overwhelming majority of the livestock, >80% are small animals (sheep and goats), and only 20% large animals. 22 families out of 36, (61%), own cattle in small quantity, and the rest 14 families (39%), do not own cattle. The ownership of cattle is a defining characteristic of agro-pastoral society, directly or indirectly related to the dietary supply of the family. All families own either of these types of animals except 6. Hence, 30 out of 36 (83%) families in these villages own any type of livestock, and 6 families own all types of these livestock.

The comparison of the livestock type and quantity in these villages in the plateau, with the livestock ownership statistics in Wekeiro highlights profound alteration in the

livelihood and social complexity. Table 5.2 presents the household statistics of 20 systematically sampled families in the village of Wekeiro. Only 9 out of 20 (45%) households possess any kind of livestock, and the rest 45% do not have any animal except chicken. The number of cattle is only 7 (1.9%), sheep 61 (16.5%), and goat 300 (81.5%) but owned by single family. There is an inverse relationship between the population density (number of families) and livestock population in Wekeiro compared with the earlier villages. The population density jumped but the livestock population aggregately declined. None of the families own these three types of animals. Neither of the families is also an extended, but all nuclear.

The sharp decline in the agro-pastoral subsistence base of the inhabitants of Wekeiro, and the steady increase in non-agropastoral means of livelihood are manifested in many fields/aspects. The backbone of the subsistence and social shift is the out migration to overseas principally Gulf States. As shown in the sample families, 11 out of the 20 (85%) families, the head of the family lives in Gulf States. 7 (35%) of the remaining families have one or more member in foreign country; hence altogether 18 of the 20 families, 90% are directly or indirectly related with foreign migration. Similarly, 13 of the 20 sampled families undergo non-agropastoral means of livelihood, primarily small-medium business in the village and nearby towns. Common business activities practiced by the inhabitants are hotel (in Adi Keih), retail shop, bee farm, and truck. Some of the inhabitants also work as skilled laborers in construction works, and professional jobs such as teacher, tailor and other public posts.

## 6.3 Discussion

This section discusses the result of the quantitative analysis and the meaning of numerical figures in reconstructing the process of sedentary village formation and expansion, and the socio-economical transformation. Number of inferences can be retrieved from these quantitative data. This section will emphasize on three quantitative analyses; sharp *decline* in livestock population and emergence of *non-agropastoral* livelihood patterns; population *density*, and the fluctuating role of lineage organization in the process.

The highest statistical variance in the data is seen in the sharp decline in the livestock population across the study area and period. Seven village of *Enda* Abdela branch of Feqat Harak have 1076 animals per 35 households, while the village of Wekeiro has 368 in 44 households. The sharp decline of livestock population from these villages to Wekeiro by more than 65% in the livestock population manifests the huge transformation these communities underwent. In this perspective, the worst decline occurred in cattle from 20% to 1.9%. The overall livestock quantity and particularly cattle shows the complete transformation of the agropastoral subsistence into non-agropastoral types. Cattle are the diagnostic livestock possession that defines the agropastoral nature of the families. Hence, majority of villages in the plateau are founded strongly on agropastoral economy. The village of Wekeiro on the other hand has deviated from this subsistence base and advanced in the non-agropastoral livelihood strategies.

Non-agropastoral families in Wekeiro heavily depend on trade, craft and skilled profession, and hence the full level social complexity is attained in this phase of occupation. The overwhelming majority of non-producing (primary product) segment of the community is the most crucial indication of social complexity, which is characterized by high level of interdependence. One of the local ways of sustaining/supporting the non-producing 44 households is by '*multiple residence*' in various locations. Majority of the inhabitants of Wekeiro are new migrants, and significant proportion of these households continue to occupy the ex-residence in different part of the plateau and slope. Some of the families even have triple residences in different villages, which is partially associated with polygamy and party with subsistence choices. In this multiple residences, the families continue to practice agropastoralism by keeping the herd in the former villages while living in Wekeiro. This can be expressed as '*localized transhumance'* or '*short range transhumance'* for the families occupy two residences in a particular locality to keep the herd and families apart. There are some villagers who own horticulture fields in the cliff villages like Eshika, and work their fields by shuttling between the field and Wekeiro.

The most common way of sustaining large non-producing households in Wekeiro is related with overseas migration to Gulf States, Europe and recently to Israel. 90% of the villagers of Wekeiro are directly or indirectly affected by the migrant work opportunities. Majority of these family heads live in exile and send money to support their family, and thus his dependents rely less on agro-pastoralism, except chicken. The villagers continue to keep considerable number of chicken for subsistence and commercial purpose. The second way of supporting from exile is when one or more

family members migrate to the overseas and occasionally supports their family. This kind of family support provide less financial (economic) compared with the previous, but still its impact is visibly felt. Small businesses such as retail shop, mill, TV house, boutique and tea rooms are flourishing in the village, and all are associated with migrant workers.

Population density has also shows remarkable variance (change) from the valley settlement and the plateau and internally within these localities. The valley, excluding Garadaf Plain, has a population density of 8.5 households per $km^2$ (300 families in $35km^2$), Garadaf Plain has 18 households per $km^2$ (112 families in $6km^2$), and plateau 19 families per $km^2$ (149 families in $8km^2$). The population density, calculated at family level, indicate the subsistence base of the inhabitants. The lowest population density corresponds with predominant subsistence base of agropastoralism with slight inclination to cultivation. The Garadaf Plain and the plateau have almost the same population density, and this tight correlation could be related with the same agropastoral subsistence base of the people.

The final statistical point that deserves explanation is the lineage composition of the sedentary villages formed at different times and places. In villages established during the early phase of the clan, villages are exclusively formed at tertiary segment. Later, in Garadaf Plain the previous 100% of lineage homogeneity was reduced to 25%. Consequently, during the early formation of sedentary villages in Qohaito, some villages were homogenous at primary segment level (57%), while others became multi-clan villages (43%). Finally, the village of Wekeiro becomes the most

heterogeneous village comprising all the primary segments of the *Enda* Abdela. Hence, the fluctuating ratio of lineage in the settlement centers and villages indicate the variable role of lineage in the formation and spread of sedentary villages in Nabagade Valley and Qohaito Plateau.

# Chapter Seven

## *Conclusion:*

## *The Rise of Complex Communities and Landscape Dynamics*

This dissertation concludes that the Feqat Harak settlement history demonstrates that Qohaito Plateau's unique landscape features and the rise of social complexity are tightly correlated, and this phenomenon can set blue print for the reconstruction of the prehistoric occupation of the plateau by various kinds of communities. Qohaito Plateau's unique geographical and topographic location at the cross roads between the Gulf of Zula and interior highland has been the core feature in its cultural development. Flannery and Joyce (2012) noted, there are multiple pathways for the origin of extended households and corporate kin groups that are often prevalent in small scale farming societies including the practice of mixed pastoral/farming subsistence base, agricultural intensification, farming of multiple dispersed fields created through land clearance, and support of craft specialization. Of the multiple pathways hinted by Flannery and Joyce, the unique landscape of Qohaito Plateau, and the resultant socio-economic transformation are among the top causes for the origin and spread of complex communities in the plateau and its surrounding. The concept of social complexity has recently been redefined to denote not only the systemic relationship and interdependence among variables, but to mean 'non-linear' created in a nuanced ways of interaction (Berkes 2006). This chapter will thus discuss the landscape analysis for the emergence of social complexity, but first a brief note on the phases and types of complex communities and their attributes will be presented.

The earlier roots of social complexity of the Feqat Harak lied at the transition from pastoralism to incipient agriculture, then to agro-pastoralism that occurred during the hydraulic, and integrated modes of settlement expansion. The temporal range of this cultural development ensues from the latter part of the 19th century onwards. The basis of this inferential formulation is the settlement configuration of sedentary villages in the research area. Rick (2007) concluded that the distribution of settlement as defining characteristics for the formation of social system, and noted, "the organization and distribution of houses and villages is fundamental in the development and maintenance of human social systems" (Rick 2007: 343).

This dissertation follows the new disciplinary alliance between anthropology and history to explain the landscape dynamics rooted social complexities in Nabagade Valley and Qohaito Plateau. Recently, Stahl and La Violette (2009) discussed the realignment of concepts and theoretical perspectives in African history that highlights the role of daily activities in the making of culture, and consequently noted "the shift from the study of 'culture' to the study of 'culture-making' practices" (Stahl and La Violette 2009). The new scientific collaboration, between history and anthropology, is framed in historians' recognition of the necessity of the daily activities rather than concentration on major events, and reciprocally in the anthropologists' recognition in the need to focus in the process of culture making diachronically. Both sides of the above dialogue, vernacular bases of culture and diachronic perspectives of culture, have been the core scientific practice of archaeology, particularly processual (explanatory) archaeology. Thus a new collaborative type of scientific engagement arises among anthropology, archaeology and history, and this collaborative inter disciplinary style is

applicable, and suitably correspond to the chronological order of Qohaito's culture-history; prehistorical, historical and ethnographic.

Following the spatial configuration of sedentary village, spatially and temporally, three classes of settlement and community complexity can be proposed; *simple*, *proto-complex*, and *complex* community and settlements. *Simple community* and settlement prevail in the valley settlement center located away from the major tributaries (riverine settlements). Simple community in the context of Feqat Harak settlement pattern is defined by socio-ecological parameters in the following way. Socially the primary causes for the origin and spread of these villages and the main organization principle is lineage organization. Moreover, the inhabitants of these villages are totally egalitarian in nature without any indication of social differentiation. The spatial homogeneity of the settlement centers manifested by the absence of any architectural variability or big structure (monument) crystallizes the complete egalitarian nature of the inhabitants. Ecologically, the valley settlements except Garadaf Plain are characterized by simple technology. The inhabitants simply follow the seasonal availability ecological resources and constantly migrate rather than establishing complex and constant relationship with distinct ecological setting. The lack of advanced technology to cope with changing environmental characterizes these communities, and the vulnerability and limited resilience was attested by the major droughts, particularly in the late $19^{th}$ century.

The earlier traits of complex communities co-emerged with the hydraulic settlement pattern in Garadaf Plain. Later, these *prototypal complex* communities were transformed

into full-fledged complex communities by the emergence of agropastoral and then non-agropastoral settlements and communities in the plateau. The prototype of complex communities formed in the hydraulic settlements of Garadaf Plain is mainly characterized by a new, non-kinship oriented type of community formation. Corporate communities were formed in the banks of the river free of lineage affiliation. Here inter-clan corporate groups at clan and sub tribe were formed, and secondly are/were characterized by significant infrastructural transformation; defensive wall, canal, ditches, wells and *nahsa* dwelling for instance. The proto-complex communities generally have multi-segment settlements, high population density, households dominated by *nahsa* dwelling, and riverine settlement pattern that are formed along the banks of the streams, which significantly increase the social complexity and non-linear relation among these diverse variables.

Another essential feature of the proto-complex communities in the Garadaf Plain is the transitional nature of the community, and the intermediary ecological position in regulating the highland to lowland framed on seasonal transhumance movement, and the pastoral mobility. This community represents a transitional stage between the simple pastoral community type and the fully complex communities characterized by agro-pastoral subsistence, trade and craft economies in the plateau. This transitional stage is a crucial factor in the settlement history or occupation of the valley and plateau in particular and Zula-Qohaito cultural zone in general. The transitional mode regulates the pastoral mobility the inhabitants perform annually between the plateau and coastal plain in swapping rainy season. The valley receives much of its annual rain during November – February, and from July – August the plain receives flush flood from the

plateau. Thus, the Garadaf Plain practically has, double rainy season and the introduction of agriculture based on spate irrigation minimizes the pastoral mobility and increase their sedentism. Sedentism is one of the essential features of complex communities, and the proto complexity in Garadaf Plain creates increased permanence with diverse subsistence base.

Temporally, the prototypal complex communities emerged five generations ago, about 1880s to 1890s, in the plain. The introduction of agriculture, incipient form, must have been gradually setting ground few decades earlier. Parkyns noted in his book that the Saho communities, by then, recently began to practice cultivation economy for the first time. He mentioned barley cultivation in particular, and this period marked by massive environmental fluctuation which could be a factor in the subsistence diversity. One of the most valuable dating techniques inferred from the development of hydraulic settlement characterized by archaic community complexity is the hereditary land holding that have continued for four generations in the Garadaf Plain. Hereditary land ownership by itself is a good indication the gradual emergence of complex community, where a long term human-settlement relationship is created and maintained. Generally speaking, the earlier forms of complex community formation and relative emerged at the last quarter of the 19$^{th}$ century, and gave rise both or the sedentary villages expansion to Qohaito Plateau, and the emergence of fully complex societies characterized by *craft* specialization and *non-agropastoral* subsistence base.

The final stage in the process of *complex communities* among the Feqat Harak occurred in the plateau rapidly; first with the emergence of fully sedentary agro-pastoral

communities, and then with the craft specialization and network of inter-community interaction, and finally with the evolution of non-agropastoral subsistence or households. Complexity, as opposed to simple communities, is understood in this formulation as Flannery and Joyce (2012) indicated by subsistence transformation to agriculture (including surplus production) and craft specialization. Both of these cultural indicators were achieved during the 20$^{th}$ century by subsistence transformation to full farming, and then non-farming livelihood.

The spread of sedentary villages from the valley to the plateau, expressed as integrated mode, and the formation of the first sedentary villages in the plateau marked the formation of agrarian villages in the plateau with perennial duration. Soon, the first performance of *Ziyari Tena* by Qadi Abdela as the cultivation ritual, which continue ever since marked the subsistence transformation of the Feqat Harak, and a major milestone towards complexity. Following the introduction and consolidation of agrarian villages in the plateau, the non-agropastoral community (household) based on craft specialization, and trade and overseas migration appeared, which culminated the gradual process of complexity in the valley and plateau.

The previous chapter describes that the main factors for the emergence of complex communities (spread of sedentary villages) in Qohaito Plateau were the environmental problem (drought) that hit the region badly in 1880s-1890s, and the bilateral nature special inter-community (ethnic) interaction in the plateau. The previous chapters discussed the specific impact up on agricultural and pastoral communities, and demonstrated how agrarian communities can hypothetically recover quickly from the

damages of drought, and how fast pastoral communities suffer from the drought. Hence, the environmental problem is much harsher for pastoral communities, but the post-drought recovery is easier and faster for the agrarian communities. Hence, the severe drought must have accelerated the transition into agriculture.

The unique inter-community relationship that evolved in the 19th century among three Saho-Tigrinya pair communities is the most important dynamics in the recent settlement history of the Qohaito Plateau. Adams (2006) developed the *peer-polity* interaction model. The model postulates the scale and intensity of cultural interaction between or among neighboring polities or communities in a region. The notion of peer implies the equality among the interacting communities (partners). Peer polity interactive applies to the Saho-Tigrinya pair of community interaction that was mediated by Qohaito Plateau. Although not much can be said about the political equality of the Saho and Tigrinya communities that were engaged in the bilateral community interaction, the economic and territorial dimension of the relationship is fairly founded on equal ground.

Hence, Qohaito Plateau was the platform for the Saho-Tigrinya bilateral community interaction which gave rise to the formation of complex communities. The landscape dynamics and the topographic set up had been amongst the decisive ingredients in the process of the rise of social complexity. The remaining part of the chapter will discuss the landscape analysis of the process. The term landscape has recently applauded for its ambiguous and flexible usage, while the landscape setting is appreciated in this approach; it is not viewed as the locale of boundaries, but in its own right, as the setting of myriad social negotiation (Adams 2006: 4). This conception is becoming a

well-established theoretical formulation in anthropology where landscape is not viewed as the physical setting of the environment but as a space created as the result of social interaction and activities, and the reciprocal relationship between human being and the environment. Turner (2005) pointed out that the definition of landscape in anthropology and archaeology is flexible but the common notion for all definitions; "is a focus on understanding the reciprocal interaction between spatial heterogeneity and ecological process" (Turner 2005: 320).

The reciprocal relationship between the environment in general and human activities characterize the recent theoretical and conceptual development in anthropology and archaeology. Human being is no longer perceived as captive and passive subject of the natural forces, rather a two-way relationship prevail between human and the physical surrounding. Qohaito Plateau is not only the result of the natural setting and topographic features; instead it is the result of both natural process and social activities carried out in the landscape. Fisher and Feinman (2005) developed a model to study the reciprocal relationship focusing the long term change of landscape.

The paradigm consists of three themes; *recursivity*, landscape as *palimpsest*, and landscape as *dynamic* and *multiscalar* entities. The notion of *recursivity* indicates the two-way relationship of human-environment, and *palimpsest* implies the existence of historically contingent entities that constantly reconfigure human choices and decision making at all scales. Thirdly, the notion of *dynamicity* and *multiscalar* entities argues "cyclical change at many temporal and geographical scales. The result is a landscape that is viewed as heterogeneous mosaic of patches undergoing in distinct regions. The

Nabagade Valley and Qohaito Plateau landscape and the settlement history can be analyzed through the three themes.

The notion of recursivity is less apparent in the process of human-ecology relationship in the valley and the plateau because the impact of human activities in the biotic and environmental conditions of the area is far from certain. The only certain ecological impact of the Feqat Harak activities visible in the plateau is vegetation. According to the oral history and few vegetation remains the Qohaito Plateau prior to the formation and expansion of sedentary villages was covered by thick deciduous and evergreen trees and wild grass. The selective use of the vegetation and topography however results nowadays in open land with very few types of shrubs, and almost no wild grasses due to the selective floral utilization by the inhabitants across the century-long occupation. Now there are very few pockets of the montane forest in the plateau; especially in the Mashur and Mereba'e localities of the plateau. Except these two locations, the plateau is open barren land, and it is quite rare to find a single tree outside these locales. The two localities with considerable density of trees are the ritual sites used by the inhabitants. The disappearance of deciduous trees and the continuation of evergreen (Juniper types) have surely long term impact on the vegetation types and density. The juniper trees located in the village of Mereba'e is the ritual site for the famous *Ziyari Tena* ritual.

The disappearance of thick trees in the plateau over the century of occupation is attributed to the land clearance activities for agricultural and construction purpose, and for timber and firewood. The first two reasons are by far pertinent because first the dense distribution of agrarian villages is small geographical area increases the demand

for agricultural fields, which can only be secured (supplied) by clearing and preparing the land for cultivation. Secondly, the construction of *nahsa* dwelling requires large quantity of timber (bough, straw and pillars). Each *nahsa* needs at least sixteen pillars of acacia or juniper types and more than twenty long timber mostly eucalyptus tree. Generally speaking, these two important flora-related activities might have significant contribution in the disappearance of trees in the plateau.

The wild grasses, which had once been used as graze ground, have also significantly disappeared due to the transformation of the extensive graze land into agricultural field. The productivity of agricultural land is heavily dependent in the elimination of any kind of wild grass from the field, because these grasses are no long pasture but weeds. All the agrarian families constantly plough and weed the field in order to eliminate the grasses. Now the plateau is occasionally dominated (occurrence) of some very few intensively used shrubs and small trees; locally called *Ere*, *Tabab* and fig trees. It is experimentally proven that the continuous and intensive use enhances the reproductive capacity of these grasses and shrubs over other floral species, and hence increases the continuation of them. These shrubs and grasses are very useful in the subsistence activities of the inhabitants particularly in bee farm, and fig tree is very useful for homestead enclosure, fodder, and source of food and income. Fig tree was introduced recently to the plateau and adjacent slopes, and replaced the previous species to become the single most dominant vegetation in the plateau, and the cumulative effect of the new floral assemblage should be studied in detail in separate research.

Similarly, the impact of agropastoral activities in the valley especially in the Garadaf plain requires a special research. One of the major impacts of the river diversion based irrigation activities in the banks is on the flow pattern of the streams. The streams are directed to the agricultural fields by canals and ditches. This phenomenon has several consequences in the natural set up of the area. First the flow of water outside the course expands the water into wider area, and the dissemination of the water in the plain enriches the underground water because once the water is spread into extensive land, it has enough time to be absorbed to the parent rock underneath. This enrichment in the underground water and possibly elevating the water table is advantageous for the human habitation, because it secures the water supply. The second important ecological consequence of spate irrigation is to constant renewal of the soil profile in the agricultural fields. There is high rate of soil erosion due to deforestation and mountainous terrain in the escarpment and plateau, and the streams usually carry large quantity of sediment in suspension, and later the sediment is deposited in the agricultural field, and this increases the productivity of the agricultural plots.

In sum, the recursivity of human-environment relation with human activity in the valley and plateau is quite visible, and the occupational history and land use activity has constantly reformed the landscape in many respects; settlement distribution, vegetation cover, hydraulic management and resources and other key features of the landscape. A deeper assessment however needs to be done to evaluate the effect of occupation in the biotic assemblage, fauna and flora, of the valley and plateau.

The second component of the model (Fisher and Feinman 2005) is the existence of historically contingent entities that shape the human choice and decision making. Nabagade Valley and Qohaito Plateau are characterized by the occurrence of historically contemporaneous natural and social entities that determined the settlement and subsistence choice of the inhabitants. Qohaito Plateau particularly has unique topographic setting that mediate two historically contingent polities to engage in a unique inter-community interaction that led to the modern day '*repopulation of Qohaito*' plateau. The notion of modern repopulation of Qohaito Plateau refers to the formation of sedentary villages by the Feqat Harak lineage group in the 20$^{th}$ century. The idea of '*repopulation*' implies that Qohaito Plateau had been occupied since late Stone Age, but abandoned for significant period prior to the Feqat Harak occupation. The Feqat Harak sedentary villages can thus be understood as the modern day '*repopulation*' of the Qohaito Plateau.

The main historical contingent entities that caused for the *repopulation* of the plateau is the existence of two principalities in the 19$^{th}$ century in the valley and the plateau by Saho and Tigrinya communities respectively. The Assaurta segmentary state discusses in the previous chapter was actively operating in the valley, and the Tekonda'e and neighboring principalities in the surrounding of Qohaito were also principalities with significant sphere of influence particularly in the trade route connecting the coast with the highland. Qohaito Plateau is located at the boundary of the political entities, and the landscape mediated the unique one to one type of inter-community interaction that evolved among the three pairs of Saho-Tigrinya communities. As Adams (2006) pointed out the landscape is viewed not as formed by physical boundary but as space

created by myriad social negotiations. Meaning, the physical boundary is not merely parameter of landscape analysis but rather is configured by social interaction. Hence, the anthropomorphic description of the landscape is the result of the inter Saho-Tigrinya community interaction based on rental land contract called *sidbi*. The *sidbi* entitles the Saho communities usufruct mostly for agriculture, and the Tigrinya principalities to collect rental fee from the Saho inhabitants. *Sidbi* is not a tax, and confirms the maintenance of the two entities distinct. Had it been tax type of payment, it would mean the legitimate incorporation of one entity under the other. Or politically speaking, one becomes subject to the other. But the land-for-money kind of accord continued until 1970s, when the new land policy issued by the socialist regime in Ethiopia abolished all hereditary land and proclamation of land belongs to the actual tiller, and hence *sibdi* ceased.

The *sidbi* protocol created constant inter-community interaction paved the way for deeper economic and social interaction between these entities (ethnic communities). *Ziyari Tena* stands exemplary event in the formation of sustainable social and economic relationship between these communities. *Ziyari Tena* is the 2nd major event in the history of Feqat Harak after the formation of the lineage group, and the initiator (Qadi Abdela) 2nd popular person following the apical ancestor. The apical ancestor has two ancestor veneration ceremonies and Qadi Abdela one in a year.

The last theme in the landscape analysis in relation to social and settlement studies refers to the existence of dynamic and multiscalar entities. This argues the cyclical changes, and multiple temporal and spatial scales occurring in a particular landscape.

This parameter establishes a comprehensive and integrated analytical framework that can systematically include the known settlement history of a landscape in historical frame, and the spatial and temporal scales associated with it. This discussion is organized in terms of temporal and spatial coordinates of dynamicity and flexible topography, and multiscalar organization of the Qohaito settlement history.

The temporal extension of Qohaito Plateau occupation ranges from the late Stone Age to present day, which can roughly be estimated to at least three thousand years of occupation in the plateau and nearby slopes. How could cyclical changes, particularly the transition from simple to complex community, occur is a good question. This cyclical cultural changes refers to the macro-level of changes; rotating from hunter-gatherer, pastoral, horticultural, agricultural and complex. Two of such cyclical macro cultural development or social complexity of variable degree is proposed here to have occurred in Qohaito Plateau; the classic complex complexity, and the Feqat Harak and other Saho lineage groups' expansion from early modern era onwards. Of course the material entanglement created by the concentration of archaeological remains belonging to different cultural period/phase in the surface is a major problem in formulating landscape analysis of the cyclical development of complex communities in the plateau. Broadly speaking, the classic complex communities is architecturally very pronounced with sharp social differentiation and monumental buildings structures alongside cave sites, late stone age lithic and ceramic industries; which is sufficient evidence to hypothesize the existence of one cycle of cultural development in the classic period.

The chronological outline of the classic cycle of development can be formulated as ranging between late Stone Age (hunter gatherer and pastoral complex, based on cave site evidences) to the 8th and 9th CAD. The archaeological and written evidences for this cycle of cultural development includes, from simple to complex sequence; cave sites and rock art, Neolithic ground and polish lithic technology, ceramic assemblage, pueblo-like contiguous dwelling, podium building, temple-like building with large obelisk blocks, ancient dam and luxurious artifacts. The epic level of complexity of this phase of cultural development occurred approximately in 4th – 5th CAD. This period was marked by the highest architectural sophistication and differentiation especially manifested in the emergence of 'royal' type of residential quarters with rectangular compound, and contiguous pueblo-like single storey dwelling. In Central Qohaito (Safira), three of 'royal' type compounds (two in Mariam Wekeiro and one in Ab'a) are found, and two of the contiguous dwelling are found in Afuma and Ab'a. The contiguous dwelling in Ab'a is highly exposed compared to the one in Afuma, and about 13 individual rooms can be identified in single block. These distinct architectural types show the high social complexity and differentiation in the plateau. The spatial scale of the classic complex communities however is difficult to comprehend at this stage of research.

The Feqat Harak occupation and settlement history represents the second cycle of social complexity in the plateau. The temporal range of this continuous process of social differentiation and complexity covers four centuries to transform the simple pastoral communities to incipient agriculture, horticulture and agrarian communities. Compared with the first cycle, this phase has less pronounced social differentiation and complexity.

Meaning, unlike the first cycle, the absence of foraging communities and urban communities in the anterior and posterior phases of the second cycle makes it less differentiated. However, as discussed in the previous chapters, the emergence of prototypal complex communities in Garadaf Plain (end of 19$^{th}$ CAD) and later complex communities in the plateau (20$^{th}$ CAD) with considerable craft specialization and regional network of exchange is a significant cultural development.

The spatial scale of the latter cycle of complex communities corresponds with the spatial extension of the three pairs of inter-community interaction that evolved in the late 19$^{th}$ CAD in the plateau. The three bilateral Saho-Tigrinya community interactions led to the formation of agrarian villages in the north, central and south Qohaito by three Saho lineage groups. Four non-agropastoral (most complex) settlements evolved in the plateau as the result of the special inter-community interaction; Hidadengese in north (Asa Lesan *kisho*); Wekeiro and Mashur in central *(Enda* Abdela and *Enda* Sofi respectively); and Igila (Dasamo *kisho*). Hence, these three localities can be considered as the spatial scale of the recent cycle of social complexity in Qohaito Plateau.

# Appendix 1

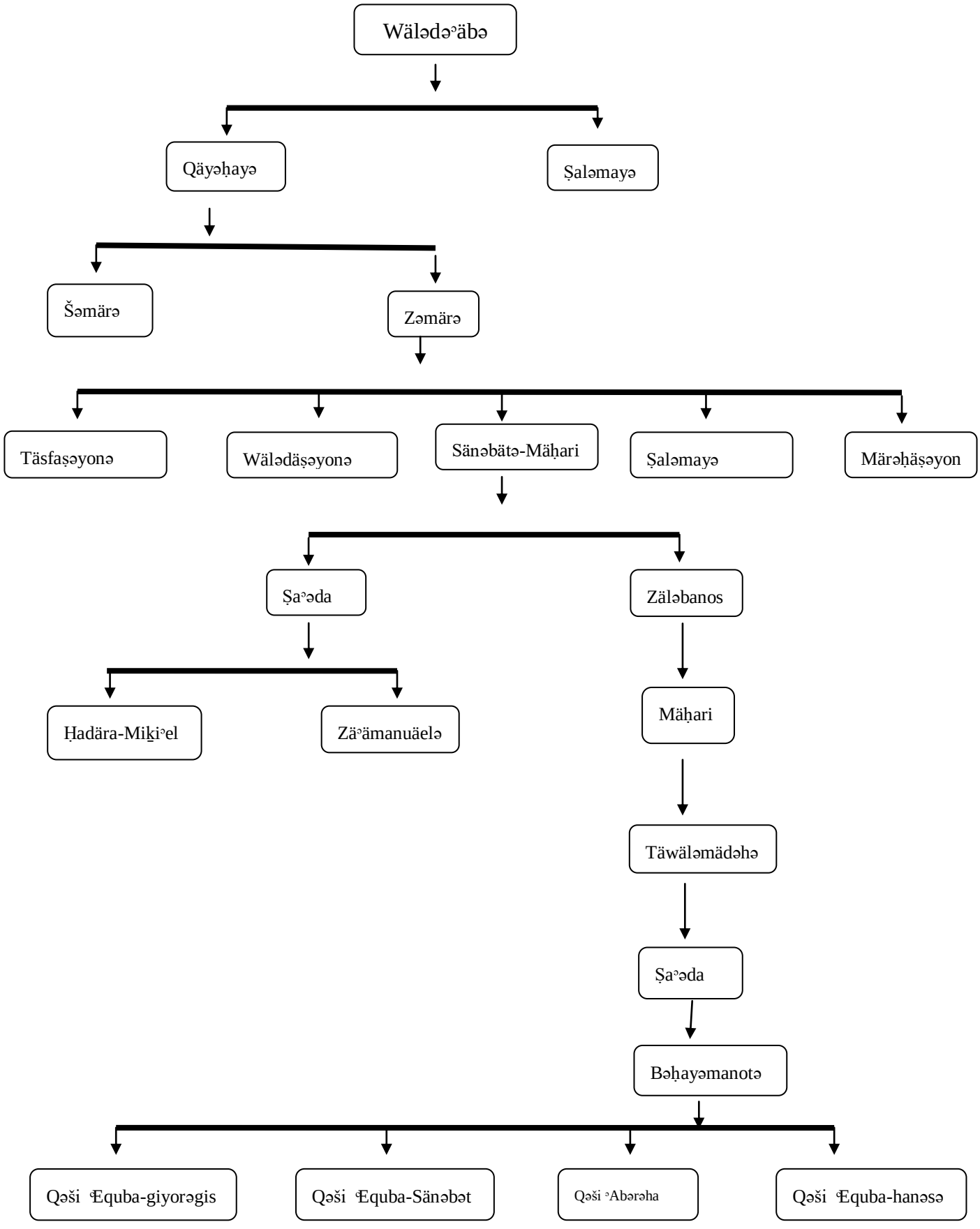
Orthographic Notes

| S.N | Plain Form | Orthographic |
|---|---|---|
| O1 | Aba'a | ʾÄbəʿa |
| O2 | Abdela | ʿÄbədäla |
| O3 | Ab Dawd | Äbə Dawədə |
| O4 | Abraha | ʾÄbərəha |
| O5 | Abubaker | ʾÄbubäkärə |
| O6 | *Are* | *ʿArä* |
| O7 | Adi Keih | ʿÄdi Qäyəḥ |
| O8 | Adi Wegri | ʿÄdi Wägəri |
| O9 | Afar | ʿÄfar |
| O10 | Afuma | ʾÄfuma |
| O11 | Ahmad | Äḥəmadə |
| O12 | Ahmedin | ʾÄḥmädinə |
| O13 | Akder | ʾÄk̲ədərə |
| O14 | Ali | ʿÄli |
| O15 | Andal | ʿAndalə |
| O16 | Ansara | Änəsara |
| O17 | Arbaba'e | ʾÄrəbabaʿe |
| O18 | *Arigot* | ʿÄrigotə |
| O19 | Assaurta | ʿÄsaworəta |
| O20 | Ba'ati | Baʿäti |
| O21 | Ba'ewa | Baʿewa |
| O22 | Behaymanot | Bəḥayəmanotə |
| O23 | Belusa | Bälusa |
| O24 | Bet Kelifa | Betə K̓älifa |
| O25 | Bet Tewekel | Betə Täwekälə |
| O26 | Che'alo | Ḉəʿälo |
| O27 | Da'ero | Daʿero |
| O28 | Dawd | Dawədə |
| O29 | Dawd Gura | Dawədə Gura |
| O30 | Digib | *digibə* |
| O31 | Digsa | Digəsa |
| O32 | *Dik* | *dikə* |
| O33 | *Dipokat* | *dipokatə* |
| O34 | *Ejaba* | *ʾEjaba* |
| O35 | Emba-Derho | ʾEməba-därəḥo |
| O36 | Ogba-Hans | ʿEquba-hanəsə |
| O37 | Oqba-Senbet | ʿEquba-Sänəbətə |
| O38 | Eshika | ʿEšəka |
| O39 | *Feq* | *Fäqə* |
| O40 | *Feqih* | *Fäqihə* |
| O41 | *Feq* Ibrahim | *Fäqə* ʾIəbərahimə |
| O42 | Feqat Harak | Fäqatə Ḥarakə |
| O43 | Fatuma | Faṭuma |
| O44 | Forohima | Foroḥima |
| O45 | Ga'aso | Gäʿäso |
| O46 | Gango | Ganəgo |
| O47 | Garadaf | Gärädafə |
| O48 | Gerwan | Gärəwanə |
| O49 | Gombo Ido | *goməboʿido* |
| O50 | Graret | Graretə |
| O51 | Gurubtiya | Gurəbətiya |
| O52 | Hadas | Ḥadasə |
| O53 | Haj | Ḥağə |
| O54 | Haj Abkur | Haj ʾÄbəkurə |
| O55 | Ham | Hamə |
| O56 | Harak | Ḥarakə |
| O57 | Hasabat Are | Ḥasabatə ʿÄrä |
| O58 | Husen | Ḥusenə |
| O59 | Ida | ʿIda |
| O60 | Idifere | ʾIdifärä |
| O61 | Igila | ʾIgila |
| O62 | Ibrahim Msgun | ʾIəbərahimə Məsəgunə |
| O63 | Ibrahim | ʾIəbərahimə |
| O64 | Intile Sheikh *Are* | Inətilä Šek̲əʿÄrə |
| O65 | Ironaba | ʾIronaba |
| O66 | Ishma'el | ʾIšəmaʿilə |
| O67 | *Kisho* | *Kišo* |
| O68 | Kom'ali | Komʿäli |
| O69 | *Le'ali'o* | Läʿäliʿo |
| O70 | Me'andita | Mäʿänədita |

| S.N | Plain Form | Orthographic |
|---|---|---|
| O71 | Ma’eyan | Maʾeyanə |
| O72 | Ma’etarta | Maʿetarəta |
| O73 | Madhulo | Madəḥulo |
| O74 | *Melhin* | *Mäləḥinə* |
| O75 | Melhin Mi’embaa | Mäləḥinə Miʿaməbara |
| O76 | Mensura | Mänəsura |
| O77 | Mereba’e | Märäbaʿe |
| O78 | Mergeta Tsegai | Märəgeta Ṣägayə |
| O79 | Merhatsion | Märəḥäṣəyonə |
| O80 | Mashur | Mashurə |
| O81 | Metera | Mäṭära |
| O82 | May Werqi | Mayə Wärəqi |
| O83 | Minifere | Minifärä |
| O84 | Mohamad | Moḥamad |
| O85 | Monokuseito | Monäk̲usäyəto |
| O86 | Nabagade | Nabagadä |
| O87 | Nasrele | Nasərelä |
| O88 | Omer | ʿOmärə |
| O89 | One Kelil | Onə Kälilə |
| O90 | Osman | ʿOsəmanə |
| O91 | *Qebele* | qäbäle |
| O92 | *Qebila* | *qäbila* |
| O93 | Qeyehay | Qäyəḥayə |
| O94 | Ql’uz | Qələʾuzə |
| O95 | *Qeshi* Abraha | Qəši ʾÄbərəha |
| O96 | Qohaito | Qoḥayəto |
| O97 | Tsadwa | Ṣadəwa |
| O98 | Tsehay Berqi | Ṣäḥayə Bärəqi |
| O99 | Tsalmay | Ṣaləmayə |
| O100 | Senbet-Mehari | Sänəbätə-Mäḥari |
| O101 | Sheri’a | Šäriʿä |
| O102 | Sarwa | Sarəwa |
| O103 | Sewlale | Säwəlale |
| O104 | Sheikh | Šek̲ə |
| O105 | Sheik Dinbago | Šek̲ə Dinəbago |
| O106 | Sheikh Saleh | Šek̲ə Saləhə |
| O107 | Saleh | Saləḥə |
| O108 | Shmer | Šəmärə |
| O109 | Siraj | Sərağə |
| O110 | Silan | Silanə |
| O111 | *Shum* | Šumə |
| O112 | *Tahara* | *ṭahara* |
| O113 | Tekleberhe | Täk̲älä Bärəhä |
| O114 | Tekonda’e | Täk̲onədaʿe |
| O115 | Tera’emni | Täraʾeməni |
| O116 | Tor’a | Ṭarəwəʿä |
| O117 | Tesfatsion | Täsfaṣəyonə |
| O118 | Tigre | Təgərä |
| O119 | Tigrinya | Təgəriña |
| O120 | Weldetsion | Wälədäṣəyonə |
| O121 | Yahya | Yaḥəya |
| O122 | Yofish | Yofiš |
| O123 | Zmer | Zəmärə |

# Appendix 2

Genealogy of the apical ancestor of the Fäqatə Ḥarakə



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